

Emergency appeal №: MDRVU011 First launched on: 29/10/2023	Glide №: TC-2023-000207-VUT
Final report issued on: 15/04/2025	Timeframe covered by final report: From 29/10/2023 to 31/12/2024
Number of people targeted: 19,500	Number of people assisted: 29,960
Funding coverage (CHF): CHF 2.5 million through the IFRC Emergency Appeal CHF 2.7 million Federation-wide	DREF amount initially allocated: CHF 750,000



Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) volunteers actively distribute essential relief items to affected communities. Such efforts highlight VRCS volunteers' dedication to delivering timely assistance and supporting affected communities (Photo: IFRC)

A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Description of the crisis

Tropical Cyclone (TC) Lola, initially classified as a Category 5 system, made landfall on the eastern shores of Maewo and Pentecost Islands on the night of 25 October 2023 as a Category 4 cyclone. The system brought destructive winds of up to 205 km/h, accompanied by torrential rainfall, flash flooding in low-lying areas, and coastal inundation, resulting in widespread damage. Significant destruction was reported across Pentecost, Maewo, Ambrym, and Malekula Islands.

On 27 October 2023, the Government of Vanuatu declared a six-month state of emergency covering the provinces of Torba, Penama, Malampa, Shefa, and Sanma. This declaration remained in effect until 25 April 2024, enabling a coordinated national and international response and expediting the mobilisation of emergency resources.

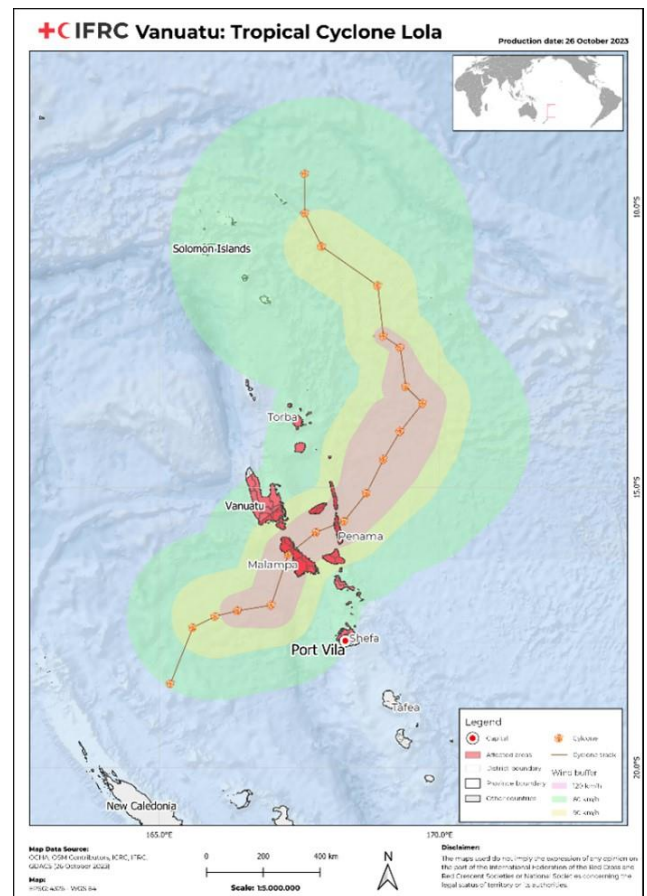
Initial estimates from the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) indicated that 150,000 people (approximately 30,000 households) were affected by the cyclone. However, as more detailed assessments became available, the figure was revised to 91,000 people directly impacted. The NDMO prioritised areas for response based on the cyclone's path, severity of impact, and population displacement. The most severely affected areas included:

- Ambrym, Malekula, and Paama (Malampa Province)
- Ambae, Maewo, and Pentecost (Penama Province)
- Epi (Shefa Province)
- Merelava (Torba Province)

Approximately 60,000 people were identified as residing in these Priority 1 areas. The cyclone caused extensive damage to houses, crops, and public infrastructure, leading to urgent humanitarian needs, particularly in shelter, food security, water and sanitation, and health services.

By the end of the response operation, key interventions had been implemented to address urgent humanitarian needs and support early recovery. Major achievements included:

- **Shelter and Housing:** Emergency shelter materials were provided to the most affected households, with repairs initiated for permanent structures.
- **Food Security and Livelihoods:** Food distributions were conducted in critical areas, and agricultural recovery support, such as seed and tool distributions, was provided.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Safe drinking water access was restored in priority areas through water purification units and infrastructure repairs.
- **Health Services:** Mobile health teams delivered essential medical care, and disease surveillance was strengthened to prevent outbreaks.



- **Multi-Purpose Cash Distribution:** Cash assistance was provided to affected households to help meet diverse and immediate needs, including food, shelter, medical expenses, and household essentials.
- **Protection, Gender & Inclusion (PGI):** Key messages on protection, gender, and inclusion were integrated into community awareness activities. Volunteers were trained to identify and support vulnerable groups, ensuring dignity, safety, and equal access to services throughout the response

The emergency phase concluded with a transition towards early recovery and resilience-building, emphasizing community-based approaches and disaster risk reduction to mitigate the impact of future hazards. While TC Lola caused significant devastation, timely coordination between government agencies, humanitarian partners, and local communities played a vital role in addressing urgent needs and laying the foundation for sustainable recovery.

Summary of response

Overview of the host National Society and response

The Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) is the largest humanitarian organisation in Vanuatu, recognised under the Vanuatu Red Cross Act of 1982 as an independent, autonomous, non-governmental organisation auxiliary to public authorities in the humanitarian field. VRCS maintains a strong relationship with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), is a member of the National Disaster Council, and collaborate closely with provincial and village disaster response teams. It is also actively engaged with the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT), serving as a co-lead and key partner to the Shelter Cluster and WASH and Health Clusters, VRCS is also closely engaged with the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT).

With a long history of fostering community resilience, VRCS collaborates with communities, the Government and partners to enhance preparedness and reduce risks in one of the world's most disaster-prone regions. It supports initiatives, such as community-based early warning systems, and the establishment of Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees (CDCCCs) while also providing training and simulations to strengthen disaster response capabilities at both community and provincial levels.

VRCS operates six branches and four sub-branches, with 361 active volunteers, 33 staff members, and several response teams, including a 120-members Emergency Response Team (ERT), a 15-member National Emergency Response Team (NERT), a five-member Pacific Disaster Response Team (PDRT). The Volunteers are extensively trained in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), shelter, first aid, health, and hygiene promotion.

Immediate Deployment and Assessments

On 27 October 2023, immediately after Cyclone Lola had passed, VRCS mobilized five volunteers and two staff from Port Vila to Pentecost Island (Penama Province) to conduct damage assessments and relief distributions. These assessments, guided by preliminary government data, evaluated damage to infrastructure, essential services, and the immediate needs of the affected populations. In-depth evaluations complemented the government findings, identifying needs for shelter, water, and medical supplies. Additionally, 15 Emergency Response Team (ERT) members were deployed to Moru (Southeast Ambrym), and Craig Cove (Southwest Ambrym) to provide first aid and psychological support alongside relief activities.

Relief Distribution and Assistance

VRCS reached 4,074 households (20,370 people) across Penama, Malampa and Torba Provinces with emergency shelter, WASH assistance and essential household items. Distributed items included tarpaulins, hygiene kits, and jerry cans, paired with awareness messaging on safe shelter, hygiene and health practices.

Health Interventions

Health messaging addressed public health during emergencies, menstrual hygiene management, psychosocial support and water and vector-borne disease awareness and prevention. On Pentecost, nine communities (approximately 450 people) received health awareness messages. Additionally, VRCS distributed 1,200 Long Life Insecticide Nets (LLIN), providing protection for an estimated 1,200 people, and nine staff trained in Psychological First Aid (PFA).

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

In the three months following TC Lola, VRCS distributed 2,215 hygiene kits, 2,951 jerry cans and 154 buckets, benefiting an estimated 11,840 people. Messaging on sanitation practices and community water systems assessments accompanied distribution on Pentecost and Malekula Islands.

Multi-purpose Cash Grants (MPCG)

VRCS leveraged experience from the prior cyclone responses to plan the MPCG programme for TC Lola. Market assessments on Pentecost and Ambrym islands identified 79 potential traders interested in joining Digicel's My Cash electronic wallet system facilitating cash transactions without conventional banking methods. The first MPCG distributions took place in August 2024. A total of 1,716 people benefited from the cash assistance provided by VRCS.

Shelter Cluster Coordination

As co-lead of the National Shelter Cluster, VRCS worked with the NDMO to map out a shelter response strategy and develop tools for planning and monitoring. A lessons learned workshop refined emergency shelter distribution strategies.



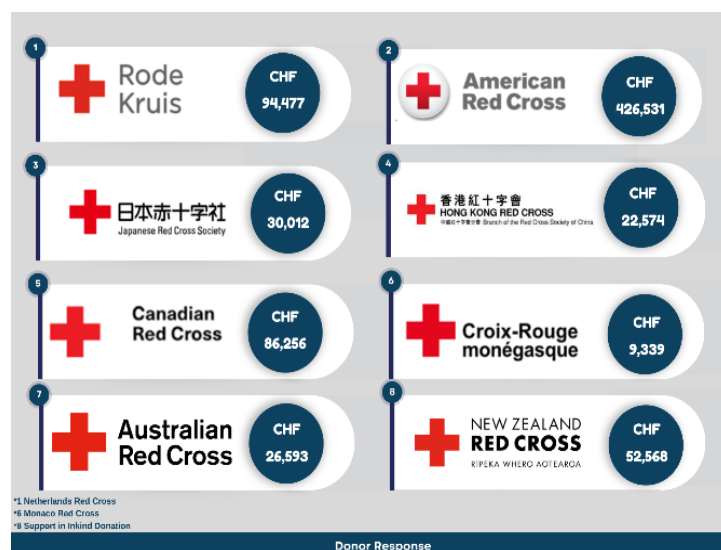
Infographic highlights the key achievements of VRCS response

Through the Emergency Appeal operation, VRCS reached an estimated **29,960 people** with lifesaving and recovery assistance.

Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement Response

The Emergency Appeal has been supported by Movement partners. New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC) contributed in-kind donations such as tarpaulins, shelter toolkits, and hygiene parcels, along with surge support. DFAT, MFAT, and USAID donated additional non-food items through NDMO for distribution. Surge delegates from Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Societies enhanced the overall response capacity.

Item	NZRC Gifts- in Kind (GIK)
Tarpaulins 4x6m	1,000
Shelter Took Kits	968
Kitchen Sets	590
Jerry Cans	500
Hygiene Parcel	200



National Coordination and Response

Collaboration between VRCS, NDMO and other organisations ensured an effective response in key areas, including North and Central Pentekost, Southeast and Southwest Malekula, and Southeast and Southwest Ambrym. The government activated evacuation plans, disseminated warnings through various channels, and conducted rapid damage assessments. Authorities allocated resources for immediate relief and initiated long-term recovery planning, including livelihood restoration and resilience building.

Needs analysis

At the time of Cyclone Lola, more than 46,000 households—representing over 180,000 people—were affected by destructive winds, intense rainfall, and widespread flooding. Initial assessments identified the northern regions of Vanuatu, particularly Penama Province, as the most severely impacted. In Priority 1 areas, approximately 75 per cent of buildings and homes were reported damaged, while Priority 2 areas saw around 50 per cent of structures affected. Many residents were displaced and sought refuge in evacuation centres or with relatives. Data from the NDMO confirmed that 5,746 houses were completely destroyed, and an additional 15,699 were damaged. These figures underscored the scale of humanitarian needs and informed the prioritization of shelter, WASH, and health interventions in the emergency response.

Shelter and Housing

The destruction of traditional thatch houses and semi-permanent structures with thatch roofing left many families in need of urgent shelter assistance. These types of housing lacked cyclone –resistance features, leaving them vulnerable to future storms. Emergency shelter materials and repair support were critical to stabilizing housing conditions. Long-term recovery efforts need to prioritize strengthening infrastructure resilience to mitigate storm damage and enhance community preparedness for future disasters.

WASH

Cyclone Lola caused significant damage to water supplies, particularly in Malampa and Penama Provinces, leading to contaminated sources and increased health risks. The damage to sanitation facilities further exacerbated public health concerns. Immediate needs included providing clean water, rehabilitating sanitation systems, and installing water purification systems. Community-based hygiene education was also a priority. While no disease outbreaks have

been reported as of the end of the operation, the effectiveness of initial WASH interventions underscores the need for continued education and support to maintain health and resilience in the long term.

Logistics

The cyclone caused significant logistical challenges, with road blockages from tree debris in northern Penama and eastern Pentecost, and landslides in Torba and Shefa provinces. These disruptions hindered transportation, although VRCS, with NDMO support, managed to deliver relief supplies to remote areas using helicopters. By April 2024, transport services, including ferries, had resumed, and all roads were accessible, although flight cancellations remained a concern. Moving forward, there is a need for strengthened infrastructure and logistical frameworks to ensure efficient emergency responses and support sustainable recovery efforts in Vanuatu.

Operational risk assessment

The VRCS, with support from IFRC CCD Suva, IFRC APRO, and surge delegates, implemented structured risk management activities for this operation. Formal procedures were in place to manage resources effectively. Branches received training in stock management and reporting to strengthen operational capacity. Capacity building efforts by the CCD have enhanced VRCS's PGI capabilities. Additionally, framework agreements developed with IFRC CCD and APRO have been instrumental in ensuring the availability of stocks for future disaster response efforts.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation actions
Political instability in country, risk of parliament being dissolved, and new elections called which may politicize the national humanitarian assistance planning	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VRCS HQ worked with branches to reinforce principled approach to beneficiary selection and delivery assistance
Logistics and availability of stocks in country	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned to avoid urgent requirements for movements, collaborated closely with other agencies and partners on provided transports and imported stock items internationally where funding allowed
Staff and Volunteers Safety	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VRCS and IFRC provided training and equipment to staff and volunteers, conducted regular risk assessments, and developed safety plans for all activities
Damage to storage structures	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-positioned relief supplies and equipment, fortified response facilities, and established alternative communication channels
Continued challenges with communication with affected areas	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up redundant communication systems, including satellite phones and radio networks, and trained responders on effective communications protocols
Water-related diseases outbreak	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensured access to clean water and sanitation facilities promoted hygiene practices and disease prevention measures
Coordinating with local authorities	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborated closely with local authorities to align response efforts and leveraged local knowledge and resources
Security risks	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed and addressed security concerns for responders and affected populations, worked

			with local authorities and security forces to maintain a safe operating environment
Cultural and language barriers	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed local staff and volunteers who were familiar with the culture and language of affected communities
Continuing vulnerabilities for affected populations due to overlapping disasters	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed long-term recovery and rehabilitation plans to address the needs of affected communities after the initial response phase
Safeguarding/Gender-based (GBV), Child Protection & Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided refresher training and briefings to staff and volunteers prior to field deployment, undertook continuous messaging on ethical and compliance behaviors, and disseminated referral and reporting lines.

B. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Following a significant reduction in the NDMO's estimates of affected households, the operational strategy was revised. However, the funding request remained at CHF 2,500,000, with some activities scaled down. The updated response plan targeted a total of 19,500 people across 164 communities, down from the original estimate of 30,000 people.


As a result, the budget for the shelter programme was reduced from CHF 1.065 million to CHF 0.471 million. This led to several changes in the original plan, including adjustments to sectoral targets. High-priority areas received shelter support exclusively, and in some locations, shelter assistance was provided through CVA programming. Given the basic needs of the community, available resources, and VRCS's expertise, the original livelihoods activity was not pursued. Instead, VRCS focused on implementing an MPCG programme, targeting 2,000 households (9,400 people). The implementation of the MPCG programme aimed to prevent affected communities from resorting to negative coping mechanisms to meet their basic needs. VRCS established criteria for selecting individuals to be supported and developed an MPCG assessment form to identify eligible recipients. This process was followed by verification and registration.

The response to TC Lola demonstrated VRCS's ability to adapt to challenges, prioritize the most urgent needs, and leverage partnerships to maximize impact. The operation underscored the importance of flexible funding in enabling a more comprehensive response to disaster-affected communities.

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL REPORT

STRATEGIC SECTORS OF INTERVENTION

INTEGRATED ASSISTANCE

	Shelter, Housing and Settlements	People reached: 20,370	
		Female > 18: 5,546	Female < 18: 4,537
		Male > 18: 5,657	Male < 18: 4,630
Objective:	<i>Communities in disaster and crisis affected areas restore and strengthen their safety, wellbeing and longer-term recovery through shelter and settlement solutions</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i># of people provided with basic and safe emergency shelter that adequately enables essential household and livelihood activities to be undertaken with dignity.</i>	20,370	18,000
	<i># of households provided with build back safer construction materials.</i>	64	64
	<i># of people provided with household items that support the restoration and maintenance of health, dignity and safety and the undertaking of daily domestic activities in and around the home.</i>	20,370	18,000
	<i># of staff and volunteers who completed training in emergency shelter and emergency household items.</i>	45	9
	<i># of people who attended training/awareness raising sessions on transitional safe shelter.</i>	342	450
Achievement:			
Relief Distribution			
In the early phase of the response, essential household items were distributed to affected communities in conjunction with damage assessments, depending on available stock. However, due to insufficient replenishment of shelter stocks on the islands following Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin, not all communities identified for aid were initially reached. To address this gap, VRCS organized the transportation of shelter materials and essential household items from the Port Vila/Shefa branch and Santo to Ambrym and Pentecost. As a result, a total of 20,370 people across Penama, Malampa, and Torba Provinces received much-needed emergency shelter and household items.			



VRCS volunteers loading shelter items to be distributed to the communities affected by TC Lola (Photo Credit: VRCS).

Some of the items distributed by VRCS as part of the TC Lola response were donated by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), and USAID through the Vanuatu NDMO. The NDMO allocated these supplies to VRCS for targeted distribution, with DFAT and MFAT contributions reaching Southeast Malekula and Central Pentecost 2.

Stock Replenishment and Supplies:

Donations from NDMO which had been received from MFAT, DFAT and USAID	Shipment from NDMO stock to Pentecost on 8 November 2023				Shipment from NDMO stock to Pentecost, Ambae and Malekula on 16 November 2023
Item group	NDMO (pcs)	MFAT Stock	NDMO - DFAT Stock (pcs)	Total (pcs)	NDMO - USAID Stock (pcs)
Tarpaulins 4x6	245		1,078	1,323	1,080
Sleeping mat	0	1,000	1,000	0	
Shelter tool kit	51	504	555	540	
Kitchen set	0	200	200	0	
Jerry can	0	1,421	1,421	0	
Hygiene parcel	0	560	560	0	
Mosquito net	0	600	600	0	
Blanket	0	0	0	0	

Stock replenishment took place to support affected communities and to ensure additional supplies were available for future needs. The following stocks arrived in-country by April 2024:

Items	Procured from IFRC (pcs)	NZRC gifts in kind (pcs)
Tarpaulins 4x6m	4,505	1,000
Solar Lamps	2,700	-
Shelter Took Kits	592	968
Mosquito Nets	1,050	-
Kitchen Sets	1,376	590
Jerry Cans	5,600	500
Hygiene Parcel (5 person)	2,076	200

Training and Capacity Building

In November 2023, a training session on shelter awareness and the use of emergency shelter items was conducted for 6 volunteers (3 males, 3 females) at the National Office. This training prepared the volunteers for their deployment to Pentecost Island to assist with the initial shelter distributions.

Additionally, as part of strengthening community resilience, VRCS organized Build Back Safer (BBS) training for both volunteers and affected populations. The training focused on cyclone-resistant construction techniques and was supported by a Train-the-Trainer (ToT) programme led by a surge delegate from the Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia), with funding from the Canadian Red Cross. The training covered:

- Shelter concepts, including classification of shelter-related non-food items (NFIs) and basic construction standards
- Practical exercises on cyclone-resistant construction techniques such as joint models, tie-down models, and bracing models
- Safe Shelter Awareness sessions, enabling volunteers to transfer knowledge to communities

A total of 9 volunteers attended the training: 3 from Malampa, 3 from Shefa, and 3 from Penama. Presley, a volunteer and carpenter from the Malampa Branch, shared:

"The training significantly improved my skills and knowledge in building strong and safe shelters. It was easy for communities to understand, even for those with limited building experience."

In March 2024, 19 branch volunteers (15 male and 4 female) participated in BBS shelter kit training on Pentecost Island. A follow-up training session was held in Malekula in April 2024, with 20 branch volunteers (12 male and 8 female) taking part. Volunteers reported that the training equipped them with the skills to support emergency shelter activities effectively, particularly in explaining the proper use of shelter items and the setup of tarpaulins for emergency shelters.

Shelter Awareness and Community Outreach

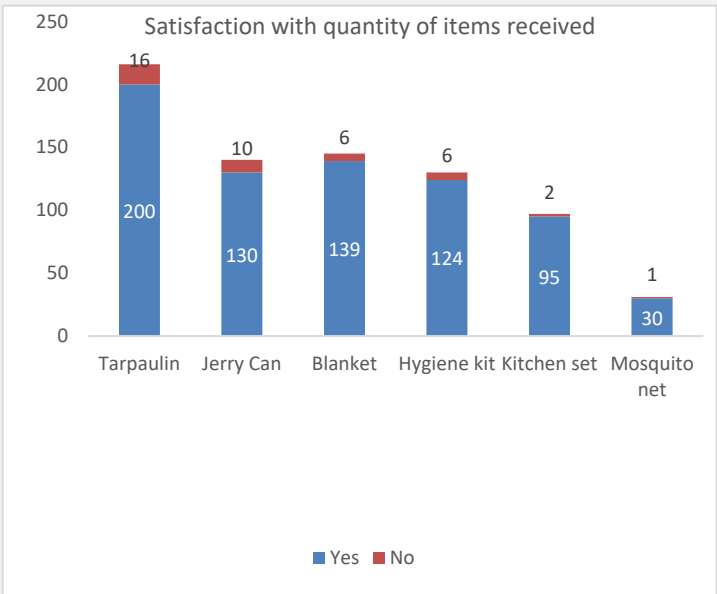
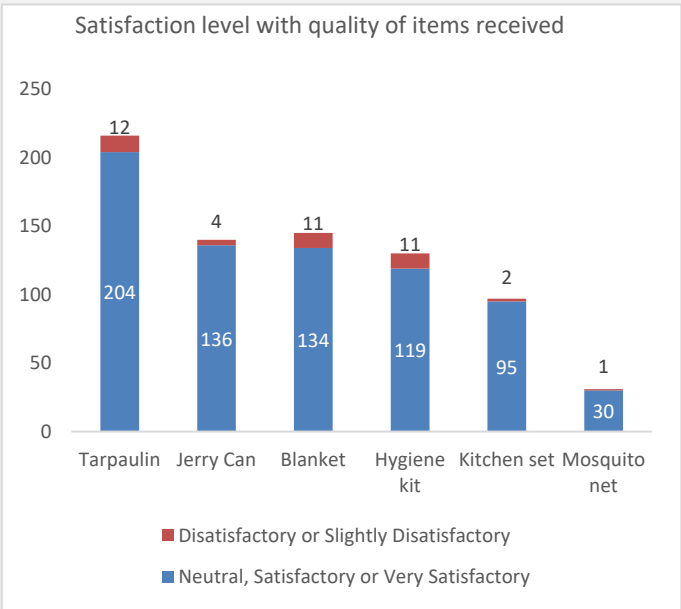
In addition to the Building Back Safer- technical training, shelter awareness initiative reached 447 people across seven area councils in Penama and Malampa. The Build Back Safer construction materials supported 64 households on the eastern side of the CP2 area council.

Beyond the technical training, VRCS also conducted shelter awareness sessions in Penama and Malampa. The sessions reached 447 people across seven area councils. The BBS construction materials provided support to 64

households on the eastern side of the CP2 area council.

To ensure that families could build safer homes, VRCS developed a Bill of Quantity (BoQ) for thatch-constructed housing, which guided the pilot BBS distribution. This BoQ outlined the materials and quantities required for households to build stronger shelters. It provided clear guidance on each item needed, simplifying and supporting the process for the households. The BoQ, used by households selected for the BBS programme, informed quotations obtained from suppliers. After developing the beneficiary selection criteria, the shopping list was piloted in a remote part of Central Pentecost 2 with 64 households.

Informal community feedback received during post-distribution monitoring indicated that some MPCG recipients planned to use the grants to purchase construction materials. Consequently, the BBS training was expedited to ensure it reached the communities before distribution of cash grants. The intention was to maximize the impact of financial assistance on safe reconstruction.



The satisfaction survey results indicate that recipients were generally pleased with both the quality and quantity of relief items received. While satisfaction with quality remained consistently high across all items, there was a slightly higher level of dissatisfaction regarding quantity, particularly with tarpaulins and jerry cans. Overall, the response reflects effective delivery, with opportunities for improvement in ensuring equitable and sufficient distribution of key relief items.

Challenges:

VRCS faced multiple challenges that hindered the efficiency of the earthquake response operation. These challenges included gaps in coordination, communication, and logistical constraints, which impacted the overall effectiveness of the intervention:

- The absence of finalized shelter policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) delayed the implementation of shelter support.
- Weak coordination between headquarters and branch offices led to inefficiencies in response efforts.
- Limited stakeholder consultation during planning and implementation resulted in suboptimal decision-making and delays.

- Communication gaps hindered the ability to effectively inform communities about their shelter needs and the available support. Awareness of the training sessions may not have reached all targeted individuals due to shortcomings in communication channels and strategies, leading to uneven participation.
- Stock shortages within the country caused distribution gaps on some islands. Cultural activities also delayed implementation in communities. Additional stock was requested from the NDMO to fill these gaps. For cultural activities, the team prioritized implementation in available communities first and planned to return to the others later.
- Another significant challenge was insufficient shelter human resources. One individual was responsible for coordinating both the shelter cluster and Vanuatu Red Cross activities, leading to an excessive workload.

To address these challenges, VRCS focused on strengthening coordination mechanisms, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and improving communication strategies with affected communities. These mitigation actions aimed to minimize the constraints and improve the overall efficiency of the response efforts.

Lessons Learned:

The operation showcased effective leadership, adequate funding, innovative practices, and comprehensive training, all of which contributed to its success. However, there are areas for improvement to enhance future responses.

- Strong collaboration and co-leadership by VRCS ensured a well-managed response. Effective coordination between headquarters and field teams streamlined decision-making and improved operational efficiency.
- Donor funding played a critical role in enabling the procurement and distribution of shelter materials. The availability of funds allowed for timely interventions, ensuring affected households received essential assistance.
- The introduction of a flexible "shopping list" approach allowed communities to choose shelter materials that best suited their needs. This method increased community ownership and ensured materials were more relevant to the local context.
- Targeted training sessions equipped VRCS volunteers and staff with the knowledge and skills required for shelter response, emergency preparedness, and community engagement, improving the overall effectiveness of the intervention.
- VRCS developed detailed shelter designs for both timber and semi-permanent structures, including comprehensive Bills of Quantities (BoQs). These designs provided clear guidance on material requirements and construction methods, ensuring that shelters were built to withstand future disasters.
- The shelter team successfully delivered Build Back Safer (BBS) training across six Area Councils affected by Tropical Cyclone Lola. This training played a crucial role in strengthening community knowledge on safe shelter practices.



Multi-purpose Cash

[Due to funding and resource constraints, livelihood recovery was removed from the programme of activities and replaced by multi-purpose cash activities]

People reached: **8,580**

Female > 18:
2,335

Female < 18:
1,910

Male > 18:
2,385

Male < 18:
1,950

Objective:

Communities in disaster and crisis affected areas are able to meet the basic needs of their household, according to their priorities.

Key indicators:

Indicator

of people reached with cash assistance

Actual

8,580

Target

9,400

Cash Assistance

In February 2024, market assessments were conducted in West Ambrym, North Pentecost, Central Pentecost 1, and Central Pentecost 2.

Following discussions within the Vanuatu Cash Working Group, it was agreed to proceed with a one-time multi-purpose cash grant of VUV 20,000 (approximately CHF 150) per household. This transfer value was based on a recommendation made in 2023 by the Vanuatu Cash Working Group, led by the Vanuatu Ministry of Finance. The initial proposal was VUV 15,000—equivalent to the government assistance amount and 39 per cent of the minimum wage for a 40-hour workweek, which equates to VUV 220 per hour¹. The amount was increased to VT 20,000 to maintain a similar 39 percent of the increased minimum wage, from VUV 220 to VUV 300 per hour, effective in March 2024².

VRCS received exceptional approval from IFRC to extend the existing cash transfer service agreement with Digicel. While approximately 7,500 households received various forms of assistance over time, only 1,716 households (8,580 people) received cash assistance under the TC Lola CVA operations. The limited reach of the CVA component was primarily due to constrained funding, which restricted the scale of the cash assistance program. As a result, only a portion of the targeted households could be supported with CVA, despite broader needs being identified in the affected communities. Simultaneously, the process for developing Framework Agreements for Financial Service Providers (FSPs) with longer 2-3-year contract durations (beyond the current response) was initiated.

VRCS established criteria for beneficiary selection, prioritizing shelter and livelihood damage caused by TC Lola, with household vulnerability as a secondary consideration. CDCCC, Area Administrators, and Community Leaders led the selection of individual beneficiaries, and VRCS validated a sample of those selected. The first MPCG distributions took place in August 2024.

The minimum number of respondents was calculated at 239, based on a 5 per cent margin of error, a 90 per cent confidence level, and a 50 per cent response distribution for a total of 2,000 beneficiaries. This ensured VRCS could confidently represent the results for all beneficiaries without surveying the entire beneficiary population. Details on volunteers inducted and briefed on the MPCG programme as follows:

Island	Males	Females	Total
Pentecost	16	23	39
Ambrym	10	4	14
Total	26	27	53

Challenges

VRCS encountered several challenges during the implementation of the cash distribution programme.

- Travelling to the islands was challenging due to issues with Air Vanuatu, which caused delays in activities on the ground.
- The registration process required beneficiaries to have valid and undamaged ID cards. However, many beneficiaries did not have ID cards, and some had damaged ones, making the process difficult.
- Rainy weather disrupted both registration and distribution, as these activities relied on internet access and could not proceed smoothly in bad conditions.
- Digicel, as a Financial Service Provider (FSP), did not provide timely support to staff on the ground, impacting the efficiency of cash transfers.

¹ WageIndicator, [Minimum Wage – Vanuatu](#), access in February 2025

² Ibid, February 2025

- Communication with Digicel was unreliable, with delays in responding to emails and phone calls, and a general lack of timely communication.
- Coordination issues arose due to inadequate communication with Digicel and other FSPs, leading to inefficiencies in the cash transfer process.
- Limited accountability mechanisms made it difficult to address community queries and concerns effectively.
- Network and logistical challenges caused delays in cash distribution, preventing timely assistance to beneficiaries.
- The absence of clear security guidelines created safety concerns for CVA recipients, highlighting the need for established protocols to protect beneficiaries during cash distributions.

Lessons Learned:

The CVA programme demonstrated both strengths and challenges during its implementation. Preparedness and execution were supported by earmarked funding and preliminary SOPs, while cash transfers empowered beneficiaries by allowing them to make independent decisions. However, operational delays, limited community engagement, and policy gaps highlighted areas for improvement.

- VRCS maintained earmarked funding for CVA programme and developed preliminary SOPs, which supported preparedness and execution.
- Cash transfers enabled beneficiaries to make independent decisions about their needs, fostering dignity and flexibility.
- Staff and volunteers were trained in CVA implementation, strengthening operational capabilities and improving overall response effectiveness.



VRCS staff and volunteers conduct registration for CVA programmes, ensuring that vulnerable individuals and families receive timely financial support to meet their essential needs. These CVA initiatives are integral to VRCS's humanitarian response, providing affected communities with the flexibility and dignity to make choices that best suit their needs (Photo: VRCS)



Health & Care

(Mental Health and psychosocial support / Community Health / Medical Services)

People reached: **2,429**

Female > 18:
661

Female < 18: **541**

Male > 18: **675**

Male < 18: **552**

Objective: *Reduce further harm or injury and support the ongoing health and well-being of affected communities*

Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	# of people reached with health awareness	2,400	6,500
	# of staff and volunteers trained on First Aid	28	50
	# of community members trained in First Aid	20	420
	# of staff and volunteers trained in PFA	9	70
	# of staff and volunteers trained in CBHFA	0	150
	# of people receiving LLINs (long life insecticide treated nets)	1,200	1,200

Achievement:

Initially, VRCS set a target to reach 6,500 individuals in the Health and Care sector. However, only around 2,400 individuals were reached during the operation. This shortfall was primarily due to logistical challenges in accessing remote communities spread across multiple islands. During the prioritization process, VRCS focused its efforts on the most vulnerable and severely affected populations. The scattered distribution of these communities, combined with high transportation costs and the geographic remoteness of certain areas, significantly impacted the ability to meet the full target.

Provision of Psychological First Aid

In the immediate aftermath of the cyclone, volunteers provided critical first aid and psychological first aid in the affected areas. Although the exact number of individuals reached during this early response was not recorded, these interventions were instrumental in addressing urgent health needs.

Distribution of Mosquito Nets

As part of the broader response, VRCS distributed a total of 1,200 long-life insecticide-treated mosquito nets to affected households. These distributions contributed to the prevention of vector-borne diseases and supported the health and safety of families across multiple islands.

Island	# HH	# Nets
Ambrym	783	786
Malekula	172	172
Merelava	3	6
Merig	3	6
Pentecost	230	230
Total	1,191	1,200

During distributions, volunteers provided health awareness sessions in 9 affected communities on Pentecost

Island, reaching an estimated 450 people. These sessions covered key topics related to Public Health in Emergencies, Menstrual Hygiene Management, psychosocial support, water- and vector-borne diseases, and hygiene promotion.

Post-distribution monitoring conducted in March and April 2024 indicated that 31 of the 308 respondents reported receiving mosquito nets. All but one were neutral, satisfied, or very satisfied with the quality of the nets.

Capacity Building and Training

In addition to direct assistance, training was a key component of the response. A total of 6 volunteers and 22 staff were trained in basic First Aid at the VRCS headquarters during the operation, funded by another programme. In April 2024, 9 volunteers (5 males and 4 females) in Malekula received training in Psychological First Aid (PFA). Training in Public Health in Emergencies (PHiE), Health Promotion, and Menstrual Hygiene Management was provided to 15 volunteers (10 females and 5 males) in Northern Pentecost. Psychological First Aid and Menstrual Hygiene Management training was also conducted in Malampa, with further sessions planned for Ambae and Torba.

To strengthen emergency response capacity, the First Aid Training of Trainers was completed in June 2024, with six volunteers from each province participating. Additionally, 2 staff members received refresher training.



VRCS volunteers engage with communities on Pentecost Island, delivering vital health awareness messages. Through information sharing and support, VRCS volunteers play a crucial role in enhancing public health and safety across the island. (Photo: VRCS)


Challenges:

- Insufficient funding limited the programme's reach across Vanuatu's vast geographic areas, restricting the scale of assistance provided.

- High volunteer turnover and a lack of advanced skills among volunteers created challenges in sustaining operations and delivering complex health interventions.
- Inadequate maintenance of water treatment systems in remote areas reduced the reliability of clean water access, affecting public health outcomes.
- The absence of rapid health assessment tools made it difficult to collect timely data and effectively plan interventions.
- Limited community engagement during health interventions affected the adoption of key health practices and the overall effectiveness of the response.

Lessons Learned:

- Close collaboration between VRCS, the Ministry of Health, and provincial health authorities ensured that health interventions were well-aligned with national priorities and effectively implemented.
- Training in Epidemic Control for Volunteers (ECV), psychological first aid (PFA), and hygiene promotion significantly builds local.
Active participation in Health and WASH Clusters improved coordination, facilitated information sharing, and ensured alignment with broader sectoral strategies.
- Community-level outcomes were also improved through the installation of water tanks, distribution of WASH and health-related IEC materials, and deployment of well-trained first aid instructors across six provinces, enhancing localized response capacity.

 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene		People reached: 11,840	
		Female > 18: 3,223	Female < 18: 2,637
		Male > 18: 3,289	Male < 18: 2,691
Objective:	<i>To restore access to WASH facilities, to reduce water-related diseases in affected communities and to protect the vulnerable.</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	# of people reached by WASH assistance	11,840 ³	6,500
	# of ventilated improved pit (VIP) toilets constructed	0	15
	# of water points rehabilitated (wells with pumps, spring protection, community ponds with filtration)	9	10
	# of people reached by hygiene promotion activities in the response period	1,215	6,500
	# of handwashing stations constructed	0	150
	# of people provided with hygiene kits	2,215	2,076

³ The figures based on the maximum calculation of 5 per household benefited from the wash items.

of staff and volunteers trained in the use of the
NOMAD water treatment system

0

20

Achievement:

Hygiene Promotion

All deployed staff and volunteers received briefings on key WASH messaging to ensure effective implementation of hygiene promotion activities. A total of 6 volunteers and 2 staff members in Torba, 15 volunteers in Sanma, 11 volunteers and 1 staff member in Malekula Island, 6 volunteers and 2 staff members in HQ/Shefa Province, and 28 volunteers and 3 staff members in Pentecost Island participated in these sessions.

During distributions conducted in nine communities on Pentecost Island, volunteers actively engaged with 1,215 community members to raise awareness about handwashing and promote good hygiene practices. Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials were distributed to reinforce these messages and encourage long-term behaviour change.

At the beginning of the response, the VRCS WASH officer attended several WASH Cluster meetings to coordinate efforts with other stakeholders. However, these meetings were later discontinued due to logistical challenges and shifting priorities among stakeholders.

Distribution of WASH Items and Cleanup Campaigns

Following the cyclone, various WASH items were distributed to affected households across multiple islands. In addition, community cleanup campaigns and rehabilitation of rainwater harvesting (RWH) systems were carried out in all nine communities on Pentecost Island. Quick fixes and the installation of water tanks reached approximately 700 people, addressing immediate water and sanitation needs. The delay in providing updates on the cleanup campaigns and RWH system rehabilitation was due to the rapid pace of activities and the prioritization of other urgent interventions. Reporting mechanisms were streamlined during the later stages of the response to ensure timely updates and more comprehensive documentation of these critical actions.

The distribution was distributed as outlined in the table below:

Island	Households receiving any WASH item/assistance (TOTAL)	No. of hygiene kits	No. of jerry cans	No. of handwashing buckets (UNICEF)
Ambrym	833	103	869	0
Malekula	675	540	105	154
Merelava	3	3	6	0
Merig	3	3	6	0
Pentecost	1,998	1,566	1,965	0
Total	3,512	2,215	2,951	154

As part of the distribution, UNICEF provided 500 hygiene kits and 154 handwashing buckets. These kits included soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, a towel, a torch, menstrual hygiene pads, and a tarpaulin with rope for privacy during hygiene-related activities. Additionally, IFRC hygiene kits, designed for a household of five, contained 12 bars of body soap, five bars of laundry soap, 40 disposable sanitary pads, two bath towels, three face towels, six rolls of toilet paper, five toothbrushes, two tubes of toothpaste, and four disposable razors. Due to insufficient funding, full menstrual hygiene management (MHM) kits were not procured; however, some

menstrual hygiene pads were included in the hygiene kits.

Community Assessment and Hygiene Promotion

VRCS carried out assessments of community water collection, storage, and sanitation systems on Pentecost and Malekula Islands, with plans to expand these assessments to Ambrym and Ambae Islands. The assessments identified approximately 60 rainwater harvesting systems in need of repair or rehabilitation, and it was anticipated that an additional 40 systems on Ambrym and Ambae would require similar work.



VRCS volunteers actively engage with communities to disseminate essential WASH messages (Photo: VRCS)

In parallel, hygiene promotion activities were conducted across Ambrym, Central and Northern Pentecost, Ambae, and Malekula, reaching a total of 485 people through handwashing awareness sessions. However, no handwashing stations were constructed during the operation. This was due to an initial assumption that latrine construction would occur, and that handwashing stations would naturally be integrated alongside them. As latrines were ultimately not constructed, handwashing stations were not established either.

Water Points Construction/Rehabilitation

To address immediate water needs, the procurement of quick-fix materials and nine water tanks took place in October 2024. Installation was completed between late October and November, benefiting nine communities across four islands and reaching approximately 700 people. Like earlier activities, no handwashing stations were constructed due to the absence of latrine installations, again reflecting the assumption that these would be built together.

Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines Construction

The construction of community Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines and handwashing stations (a Pacific design

using bamboo, functioning similarly to a tippy tap) was initially planned to begin in June; however, this did not transpire due to limited budget allocation

Post-distribution monitoring

Post-distribution monitoring (PDM) was conducted in March and April 2024, surveying 308 households, of which 264 had received WASH items while 44 had not. One focus group discussion was held, with further discussions was planned separately for men and women in two villages to gather additional feedback on the distribution process and item usage.

Feedback on WASH items revealed that jerry cans were generally well-received. Among the 140 households that received them, 136 were neutral, satisfied, or very satisfied with the quality. However, 10 households reported that the quantities were insufficient, and some mentioned that the jerry cans were too small. This issue was anticipated due to stock shortages following Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin. Regarding hygiene kits, 119 out of 130 households expressed satisfaction with the quality, and 124 found the quantity of items adequate. Almost all households indicated that they used some or all of the items provided.

Challenges:

- A lack of resources for community-level WASH initiatives and follow-up mechanisms for hygiene practices limited the effectiveness of interventions.
- Insufficient funding restricted the reach of the WASH programme across Vanuatu’s vast geographic areas, reducing the number of communities that could be supported.
- High volunteer turnover and limited advanced skills among volunteers created challenges in sustaining operations and delivering complex WASH interventions effectively.
- Inadequate maintenance of water treatment systems in remote areas reduced the long-term impact of WASH interventions, affecting access to clean water.
- The absence of WASH rapid assessment tools made it difficult to collect timely data and inform decision-making for response planning. Limited community engagement during health interventions affected the adoption of key hygiene practices and reduced the effectiveness of WASH initiatives.
- Training for staff and volunteers on the use of the NOMAD water treatment system was initially planned; however, it did not take place as the NOMAD machine stored in the warehouse was non-functional and had missing components, preventing the training from being conducted.

Lessons Learned:

- Active participation in Health and WASH Clusters enabled effective coordination with other stakeholders, ensuring alignment with national and regional response efforts.
- Volunteers received training in hygiene promotion, which strengthened local response capacity and improved community-level health awareness.
- Infrastructure improvements, including the installation of water tanks and the distribution of WASH and health-related IEC materials, contributed to better health outcomes in affected communities.



Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI)

People reached: **8,459**

Female > 18:
2,327

Female < 18:
1,904

		Male > 18: 2,286	Male < 18: 1,942
Objective:	<i>Communities identify the needs of the most at risk and particularly disadvantaged and marginalized groups, due to inequality, discrimination and other non-respect of their human rights and address their distinct needs</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i># of RCRC staff and volunteers trained on PGI</i>	45 volunteers and 27 staff	15
	<i># of people reached by PGI</i>	8,387	19,500

Achievement:

PGI Policy Review

The VRCS PGI policy was reviewed by volunteers and staff to ensure alignment with best practices. All VRCS volunteer deployment teams were briefed and signed the VRCS Child Protection Code of Conduct, with a total of 45 volunteers (15 from Malampa, 15 from Penama, and 15 from Shefa) signing in May 2024.

Capacity Building and Training

To strengthen awareness and understanding of PGI principles, training sessions were conducted in March and April 2024. A total of 45 volunteers (24 females and 21 males) from Shefa, Malampa, and Penama, along with 27 staff members from VRCS HQ, participated. The training covered key topics such as the IFRC Minimum Standards for PGI, IFRC Protection Integrity, and Child Protection.

One participant shared:

"The training allowed me to understand the importance of DAPS, which stands for Dignity, Access, Participation, and Safety when working in a community."

Household Assessment

As part of the response, initial household assessments were conducted for 5,387 households, capturing sex, age, and disability-disaggregated data. The assessment identified 792 were female headed households. This data was used to inform VRCS emergency response for example with the Cash programming, persons living with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women were some of the key selection criteria for cash recipients.

Data on people living with disabilities was also collected:

People living with a disability	Total Households	Males living with a disability	Females living with a disability	Total people living with a disability
Ambrym	1,017	59	51	110
Malekula	2,034	162	233	395
Merelava	3	0	1	1
Merig	3	0	0	0
Pentecost	2,330	149	160	309
Total	5,387	370	445	815

Distribution of Solar Lanterns

To improve safety and accessibility, 1,705 households received solar lanterns from VRCS stock in late 2023 and early 2024. The distribution details are as follows:

Province	Area Council	# Solar Lanterns
Ambrym	Southeast	3
Ambrym	Southwest	1
Pentecost	Central Pentecost 1	469
Pentecost	Central Pentecost 2	243
Pentecost	North Pentecost	989
Total		1,705

To ensure preparedness for future needs, VRCS replenished its stock of solar lamps in April 2024, securing an additional 2,700 units.

Challenges:

- While policies and frameworks were in place, many staff and volunteers lacked adequate knowledge or practical skills to apply them consistently in the field. Consistent training and support for staff and volunteers required to be able to operationalize learnings from PGI training and refreshers into their daily course of work in the field during emergencies.
- The absence of a dedicated PGI focal point limited systematic implementation and coordination, and underreporting of PGI-related issues reduced the visibility of protection risks in operational decision-making.
- Community feedback systems were not sufficiently robust to capture the voices and needs of the most vulnerable groups.
- Working with local community structures and mechanisms to have a better understanding of vulnerability within its communities.
- Limited funding restricted the implementation of PGI initiatives, reducing access to essential resources such as dignity kits and community engagement activities.
- There was no budget allocated for the procurement of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits and dignity kits, limiting the ability to provide essential hygiene and protection items to women, girls, and other vulnerable groups.

Lessons Learned:

- Providing child protection and safeguarding training to staff, volunteers, and board members enhanced understanding of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct and promoted safer programming.
- VRCS's active engagement in the Protection and Gender Cluster enabled stronger coordination and knowledge exchange with partners like IFRC and UNICEF.
- Dissemination of PGI and child protection IEC materials at the community level helped increase understanding and ownership of key protection concepts among affected populations.
- Integrating PGI principles across all sectors contributed to more responsive and equitable interventions that addressed the diverse needs of vulnerable groups.



Community Engagement and Accountability

People reached: **1,010**

Female > 18: **275**

Female > 18: **225**

Male > 18: **280**

Male > 18: **230**

Objective:

A robust, two-way communication system is established to actively engage and integrate the needs, preferences, and feedback of affected communities, fostering trust, ownership, and resilience while upholding accountability, dignity, and respect. Operational updates and strategies are communicated with communities via regular updates on electronic media

Key indicators:

Indicator

Actual

Target

of community feedback mechanisms in place

3

3

of complaints received through feedback mechanisms

5

5

Achievement:

While visiting communities, staff and volunteers encouraged community members to utilize the Red Cross free hotline number (#165) to provide feedback or raise questions and concerns. Other feedback options included feedback boxes in some communities where VRCS teams were working and the VRCS Facebook page. VRCS recently established a focal point for CEA activities. IFRC APRO provided tools to support the incumbent, and some associated procedures were put in place to ensure the consistent collection and monitoring of feedback, as well as the tracking of responses.

Challenges:

- The absence of a dedicated Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal point hindered effective community interaction, making it difficult to coordinate engagement efforts, address concerns efficiently, and ensure a structured approach to collecting and responding to community feedback. Without a centralized role, CEA activities were inconsistently implemented across different locations.
- Inadequate systems for capturing and responding to community feedback limited the ability to address community needs in a timely and effective manner. The lack of structured mechanisms, such as dedicated reporting channels, regular feedback analysis, and systematic follow-ups, reduced transparency and responsiveness, weakening community trust in the process.
- Community Unfamiliarity with VRCS Response Plans: in several areas, communities were not well informed about the objectives, timelines, or scope of VRCS interventions, which affected participation, trust, and ownership.
- Lack of Two-Way Communication Channels: The absence of structured, culturally appropriate platforms for feedback and dialogue limited opportunities for communities to raise concerns, ask questions, or receive timely updates.
- Weak Feedback Systems: Feedback, when collected, was not consistently documented, analyzed, or used for program adaptation, reducing the accountability and learning potential of the operation.

Lessons Learned:

- Appoint a CEA Focal Point: designate a dedicated CEA focal person at HQ and branch levels to lead coordination, ensure sector-wide integration, and monitor the quality of community engagement across the operation.

- Comprehensive training programmes for staff and volunteers strengthened their understanding of CEA objectives, ensuring they were equipped to facilitate engagement activities, collect feedback, and promote accountability within their respective communities.

Enabling approaches

 National Society Strengthening			
Objective:	<i>VRCS increases capacity in Response & Recovery and has overall improved service delivery, aligned with its 2022-2026 Strategic Plan</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i># of volunteers covered by insurance</i>	300	300
	<i># of staff and volunteers who receive training in health and safety procedures</i>	N/a	25
Achievement:			
Volunteer and staff protection			
<p>Volunteer accident insurance has been arranged for 300 volunteers for 2024. During the reporting period, a safety incident occurred at sea involving a VRCS volunteer. A total of 100 life jackets were purchased in the month of April 2024.</p>			
Finance, procurement, logistics			
<p>The IFRC CCD Suva finance officer has provided support for budgeting and financial reporting. Additionally, the IFRC CCD Logistics Officer was in Vanuatu from October to early November to support the VRCS logistics officer with the early response and repacking of hygiene kits.</p>			
Branch development			
<p>The TC Lola response highlighted meaningful progress in the development and decentralization of VRCS branch offices, particularly in terms of operational coordination, volunteer mobilization, and localized response readiness. Branch offices across affected provinces played an instrumental role in facilitating rapid assessments, distributing relief items, and coordinating with local authorities — reflecting growing confidence and capacity at the subnational level. The activation of Disaster Committees and Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) at branch level further demonstrated the branches' ability to manage emergency responses in alignment with national systems.</p>			
<p>Staffing and volunteer structures were strengthened, with many branch teams engaging actively in shelter, health, and CVA interventions. The presence of full-time officers and designated focal points at branch level improved information flow, enabled better logistical coordination, and ensured alignment with HQ planning. Additionally, peer-to-peer learning between branches and headquarters supported capacity-building and</p>			

encouraged adaptation of good practices. These achievements indicate steady progress toward VRCS's strategic goal of decentralizing services and building strong, resilient branch structures capable of leading localized humanitarian action.

Volunteer Recruitment: VRCS has recruited 14 new volunteers on Ambrym Island, where the branch previously had no volunteers. These new volunteers will play a key role in the Ambrym cash grant program.

Office Renovation: Due to budget constraints, it was not possible to develop a warehousing or separate storage unit on North Pentecost Island. Instead, the existing office/building was renovated to accommodate essential household items. The renovation and transfer of stock to Pentecost were completed in November 2024.

Post-Distribution Monitoring: During post-distribution monitoring, some respondents reported inconsistencies in the distribution of emergency items. Contributing factors included volunteers receiving verbal instructions prior to deployment, leading to variations in understanding distribution criteria. To assist with future training, IFRC APRO will provide a sample PowerPoint and handouts. Additionally, the VRCS Shelter team will develop a damage assessment handout for volunteers prior to deployment. The assessment survey will be translated into the local language to facilitate consistency.

Resource Sharing: The IFRC CCD National Society Development Manager has held preliminary discussions with VRCS to share tools, resources and technical expertise from across the Pacific.

NSD Support

The IFRC CCD supported the organization of a National Society Development (NSD) Workshop in October 2024. One of the topics addressed was NSD in Emergencies (NSDiE), based on a revised NSDiE Guidelines the IFRC has developed. Aspects discussed to gain further insight from the VRCS Governance and staff team included:

- Role of Governing Board.
- Leadership Development.
- NS Leadership Responsibilities.
- Volunteer Development Branch to NS Headquarters Relationship.
- NSD PGI.
- Resource Mobilization - Headquarter and Branches (Sanma and Shefa).
- Non-Emergency Activity Continuity.

This approach will facilitate the VRCS considering long-term development aspects in their current and future emergency operations.

Challenges:

- The primary challenge for NSD support lies in balancing immediate, short-term needs with a focus on sustainable, long-term development. While this might appear conflicting, it is possible to address both simultaneously under the NSDiE framework. Achieving this requires coordinated prioritization and commitment from all stakeholders, including NS Leadership, the IFRC Operations team, and the IFRC CCD team, to ensure that both urgent operational needs and future developmental goals are aligned and effectively integrated.

Lessons Learned:

- Over the past two years, VRCS has responded to four major emergencies—three cyclones and one earthquake—highlighting the increasing frequency and intensity of disasters in Vanuatu. This pattern has been flagged with the NSD Unit in Geneva, as it challenges the conventional assumption that emergencies

occur with more time in between. The Vanuatu context demonstrates that some National Societies are consistently operating in high-emergency environments. This raises an important consideration for the IFRC: how to adopt a longer-term perspective that balances ongoing emergency response with the continued delivery of essential non-emergency services. Identifying an effective approach to managing both simultaneously remains a key learning from this operation and will require further analysis and support moving forward.

- The deployment of full-time officers across VRCS headquarters and branches enabled better coordination, administrative efficiency, and a more consistent response during the TC Lola operation.
- In logistics and administration, trained personnel, stock management systems, and established policies ensured timely and efficient delivery of assistance.
- The existence of guiding documents such as the Constitution, rules of procedure, and the Volunteer Development Strategy provided a solid foundation for decision-making and operational planning. Volunteer management systems also demonstrated progress, with structured registration processes, a functioning database, and regular engagement through peer-to-peer learning and the Pacific Youth Volunteer Network.



Coordination and Partnerships

Objective:

Develop an efficient and coordinated approach with all stakeholders involved.

Achievement:

- A regular coordination mechanism was established to ensure alignment and coordination with all Movement partners
- Bilateral support was provided to VRCS through Federation-wide approach
- Federation-wide planning, monitoring, and reporting were applied with VRCS in the lead and coordinated by the IFRC
- The VRCS and IFRC delegates participated in fortnightly Inter Agency coordination meetings organized by the NDMO and weekly Shelter Cluster meetings
- VRCS also participated in the Cash Working Group, and IFRC delegates represented the Shelter Cluster in the Weekly Inter Cluster Coordination meetings

Challenges:

- There were no satellite phones operational in the immediate aftermath to TC Lola, which hindered the ability to progress Restoring Family Links (RFL) services.
- Insufficient funding available to progress RFL services.

Lessons Learned:

- Adequate planning and preparedness to ensure RFL services can be established in a timely manner following a disaster
- The importance to secure sufficient funding to support the delivery of RFL services
- The importance of establishing a regular coordination mechanism with all stakeholders involved in the response

- The value of bilateral support and federation –wide approaches in facilitating financial and technical support to VRCS



Shelter Cluster Coordination

Objective:

Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements are well coordinated, supporting a comprehensive, quality, coherent, and consistent. Shelter and Settlements response co-led by VRCS with support from IFRC.

Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Shelter cluster response strategy in place and agreed by the shelter cluster members, informing the National response plan.</i>	Yes	Yes
	<i>Information management system in place capturing potential gaps and duplication of efforts and monitoring progress in the implementation of the shelter cluster strategy.</i>	Yes	Yes
	<i>Technical guidance and standards for response in place and agreed by the shelter cluster members.</i>	No	Yes
	<i># of regular coordination meetings taking place during response phase, providing a platform for coordination to humanitarian shelter members</i>	10	10
	<i># of regular coordination meetings taking place during early recovery phase and preparedness, providing a platform for coordination to humanitarian shelter partners</i>	0	6
	<i># of partners regularly participating in shelter cluster/sector activities</i>	8	10

Achievement:

VRCS and the IFRC Pacific shelter coordinator contributed to shelter cluster coordination through the following activities:

- Led six shelter cluster meetings, facilitating coordination, analysis of damage and needs in the affected areas.
- Developed a strategy, plans, objectives, and indicators for the shelter and settlements sectors
- Established appropriate tools to track and monitor implementation of the response, identifying and addressing potential gaps and duplications
- Contributed to capacity building for the NDMO shelter cluster lead in coordination of the response
- Advocated for clear communication and accountability to affected communities

- Supported the delivery of Shelter and Settlements assistance, providing a platform to ensure that the response is driven by agreed priorities, and developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication and gaps
- Informing strategic decision-making for the humanitarian response through needs assessment and response gap analysis.

Challenges:

- Insufficient stock in country, leading to scarcity of essential items
- Limited coordination with other clusters, particularly logistics and displacement
- Difficulty in meeting standards for response, particularly for non-government organizations involved in emergency response work in Vanuatu

Lessons Learned:

- The importance of coordination between the shelter cluster and other clusters
- The need for standardization of emergency relief items and technical guidance and standards for response
- The importance of contingency planning, preparedness and capacity building, considering the cyclone season in Vanuatu.
- The value of lesson learned workshops in providing a roadmap for Shelter to address the challenges which include:
 1. **Standardization of Practices:** The development and dissemination of Shelter Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are crucial to ensuring consistent and effective shelter practices across operations. By finalizing and sharing these SOPs by the end of 2025, teams can establish clear guidelines for shelter responses.
 2. **Unified Training Approach:** Comprehensive "One Roof" training programmes are necessary to equip HQ and branch staff with consistent understanding and skills. This approach fosters better coordination and alignment in shelter initiatives.
 3. **Improved Coordination Mechanisms:** Establishing clear communication protocols between HQ and branch teams is essential for enhancing decision-making processes and operational efficiency during shelter responses.
 4. **Community-Centered Engagement:** Mechanisms for two-way communication with communities are vital for accurately understanding shelter needs and addressing them effectively. Empowering communities to actively participate improves program relevance and impact.
 5. **Capacity Building for Staff and Volunteers:** Targeted workshops focusing on shelter cluster coordination and technical skills provide essential tools to build staff and volunteer capacity. These efforts strengthen the ability to deliver impactful shelter programs.
 6. **Timely Implementation:** All efforts were prioritized for completion by December 2025, emphasizing the urgency of achieving high-impact results in shelter programming.



**Secretariat
Services**

Objective:

Indicator

Actual

Target

Key indicators:	<i># of rapid-response members deployed for the operation</i>	4	4
	<i># of evaluations conducted for this response</i>	1	1

Achievement:

Rapid-Response Members Deployment

Surge support played a critical role in strengthening the VRCS response capacity during the TC Lola operation. The IFRC CCD Pacific in Suva deployed a Disaster Risk Management delegate to serve as the interim operations manager for two months, supporting the initial emergency phase with backing from the Canadian Red Cross. Additionally, surge personnel included a Shelter Cluster Coordinator and an Operations Manager, both deployed for three months with support from the Australian Red Cross. A PMER Coordinator, supported by the New Zealand Red Cross, provided dedicated assistance for two and a half months.

Furthermore, a Shelter Coordinator from the Indonesian Red Cross (Palang Merah Indonesia) was deployed for six weeks, supported by the Canadian Red Cross through the Regional Deployment Fund. These deployments significantly bolstered the delegation's capacity to manage the early and evolving phases of the operation effectively.

In addition to surge deployments, thematic and technical support was provided by the IFRC CCD and Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO). Thematic coordinators from across key sectors—including Health, WASH, Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA), Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI), Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), National Society Development (NSD), and Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER)—offered technical guidance to VRCS, particularly during the planning and development of the Operational Strategy. To support shelter cluster coordination specifically, the Pacific Shelter Coordinator was deployed from IFRC CCD. A CVA Delegate was also deployed to assist with the market assessment and the planning stages of the multi-purpose cash grant programme. Moreover, IFRC CCD's finance, administration, and human resource teams played an instrumental role in facilitating the financial structure of the operation, including international fund transfers and HR travel logistics. All CCD Suva deployments to Vanuatu were financed through the TC Lola Emergency Appeal, ensuring timely and effective operational support to VRCS throughout the response.

Reflective Workshop (in place of Final Evaluation)

As an alternative to the originally planned final evaluation, a *Reflective Workshop* for the TC Lola operation was a key milestone in strengthening the VRCS preparedness and response capacity. Held over two days in Port Vila, the workshop brought together a wide range of participants, including staff and volunteers from VRCS headquarters and branch offices, as well as representatives from the IFRC. The workshop aimed to critically review the effectiveness, relevance, and quality of the TC Lola response operation.

Through a participatory and consultative approach, featuring group discussions and shared reflections—participants were able to assess the strengths, challenges, and gaps faced during the response. This inclusive process ensured that a variety of perspectives were taken into account, contributing to a well-rounded evaluation. One of the workshop's key achievements was the development of a practical action plan with clear, time-bound recommendations for short, medium, and long-term improvements. These recommendations will be integrated into VRCS's strategic and operational planning, helping to enhance future emergency preparedness and

response. The workshop also served as a platform for comparing TC Lola with previous operations, allowing valuable knowledge and lessons learned to be captured and applied going forward. Facilitated by a PMER Senior Officer from the IFRC APRO, the event was well-organised and successfully met its objectives, reinforcing VRCS's commitment to continuous learning, accountability, and operational excellence in disaster management.

Challenges:

- IFRC staff had a limited understanding of Vanuatu's local context, which affected the effectiveness of certain interventions and decision-making processes.
- Delays in fund transfers and the delivery of non-food items (NFIs) impacted the timeliness of response efforts, slowing down critical support to affected communities.
- Communication barriers and coordination challenges between IFRC and VRCS sometimes led to inefficiencies in planning and implementation.

Lessons Learned:

- Collaboration with the Government of Vanuatu, sector clusters, and Movement partners enabled a more coordinated and targeted response, underscoring the importance of relationship-building and joint planning before and during emergencies.
- VRCS branches played a central role in assessments, distributions, and community engagement, reaffirming that empowering sub-national structures is critical for effective and agile response.
- The collaboration between VRCS and IFRC was highly effective, with regular CCD Suva staff, surge support and technical assistance provided. This partnership facilitated timely and efficient responses to emergencies, enhancing VRCS's operational capacity.
- The expansion of regional and international training programmes significantly strengthened VRCS's capacity. These training initiatives, conducted in partnership with IFRC and partner NS, equipped VRCS staff and volunteers with essential skills and knowledge, improving overall performance and preparedness.

D. FINANCIAL REPORT

The IFRC Secretariat funding requirement was CHF 2,500,000, of which only CHF 1,466,452 (59 per cent) was received (including a DREF loan of CHF 750,000). Total expenditure amounted to CHF 1,417,899, leaving a remaining balance of CHF 48,553. Please refer to the financial report attached to this document for more details.

As an initial loan of CHF 750,000 was provided through the IFRC DREF for this operation, any unspent balance will be returned to the DREF fund as part of the reimbursement process.

The IFRC would like to express its sincere gratitude to all donors for their invaluable support to this Emergency Appeal. Their generous contributions have enabled the timely provision of humanitarian assistance to people affected by the disaster.

Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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- **Operations Coordinator:** Saara Ilmonen; email: opscoord.pacific@ifrc.org
- **Communications Manager:** Afrhill Rances; email: afrhill.rances@ifrc.org

At the IFRC Geneva

- **Senior Officer Operations Coordination:** Christina Duschl; email: christina.duschl@ifrc.org

For IFRC Resource Mobilisation and Pledges support:

- **IFRC Asia-Pacific Regional Office:** Maz Afiah Mohammad Khairul Azmi; email: PartnershipsEA.AP@ifrc.org

For In-Kind Donations and Mobilisation table support:

- **Manager, Regional Logistics Unit:** Nuraiza Khairuddin; email: nuraiza.khairuddin@ifrc.org

Reference documents



Click here for:

- [Previous Appeals and updates](#)

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief, the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable, to **Principles of Humanitarian Action** and **IFRC policies and procedures**. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and always promote all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

Operational Strategy

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2023/10-2025/2	Operation	MDRVU011
Budget Timeframe	2023/10-2024/12	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 10 Apr 2025

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRVU011 - Vanuatu - Cyclone Lola

Operating Timeframe: 26 Oct 2023 to 31 Dec 2024; appeal launch date: 26 Oct 2023

I. Emergency Appeal Funding Requirements

Total Funding Requirements	2,500,000
Donor Response* as per 10 Apr 2025	769,020
Appeal Coverage	30.76%

II. IFRC Operating Budget Implementation

Planned Operations / Enabling Approaches	Op Strategy	Op Budget	Expenditure	Variance
PO01 - Shelter and Basic Household Items	1,064,000	471,371	427,176	44,195
PO02 - Livelihoods	262,000	0	39	-39
PO03 - Multi-purpose Cash	0	443,039	442,078	961
PO04 - Health	179,000	46,058	27,204	18,854
PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	247,000	102,978	65,727	37,252
PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion	47,000	24,011	4,505	19,507
PO07 - Education	0	0	0	0
PO08 - Migration	0	0	0	0
PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery	75,000	0	35,588	-35,588
PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability	1,000	3,822	7,908	-4,086
PO11 - Environmental Sustainability	0	0	0	0
Planned Operations Total	1,875,000	1,091,281	1,010,225	81,056
EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships	16,000	0	864	-864
EA02 - Secretariat Services	294,000	58,466	173,551	-115,084
EA03 - National Society Strengthening	315,000	261,526	233,259	28,267
Enabling Approaches Total	625,000	319,993	407,674	-87,681
Grand Total	2,500,000	1,411,273	1,417,899	-6,626

III. Operating Movement & Closing Balance per 2025/02

Opening Balance	0
Income (includes outstanding DREF Loan per IV.)	1,466,452
Expenditure	-1,417,899
Closing Balance	48,553
Deferred Income	0
Funds Available	48,553

IV. DREF Loan

* not included in Donor Response	Loan :	750,000	Reimbursed :	0	Outstanding :	750,000
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Operational Strategy

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2023/10-2025/2	Operation	MDRVU011
Budget Timeframe	2023/10-2024/12	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 10 Apr 2025

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRVU011 - Vanuatu - Cyclone Lola

Operating Timeframe: 26 Oct 2023 to 31 Dec 2024; appeal launch date: 26 Oct 2023

V. Contributions by Donor and Other Income

Opening Balance						0
Income Type	Cash	InKind Goods	InKind Personnel	Other Income	TOTAL	Deferred Income
American Red Cross	426,531				426,531	
Australian Red Cross (from IFM Investors*)	26,593				26,593	
DREF Response Pillar				750,000	750,000	
Hong Kong Red Cross, Branch of the Red Cross Socie	22,574				22,574	
Japanese Red Cross Society	30,012				30,012	
Red Cross of Monaco	9,339				9,339	
Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society	20,672				20,672	
The Canadian Red Cross Society (from Canadian Gov	86,256				86,256	
The Netherlands Red Cross (from Netherlands Govern	94,477				94,477	
Total Contributions and Other Income	716,452	0	0	750,000	1,466,452	0
Total Income and Deferred Income					1,466,452	0