



Aligning international climate finance access with *Pacific priorities*

CLIMATE TALK WORKSHOP REPORT ·
PORT VILA, APRIL 2026





Port Vila Climate Talk workshop, April 16, 2026.

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A nation on the *climate frontline*

Vanuatu is widely recognised as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, where cascading effects and threats are increasing across the country. With more frequent tropical cyclones, rising sea level, dwindling fish and coral life due to warming oceans, and unpredictable weather patterns, communities are already exposed to extreme weather events and ongoing geological hazards. This is only likely to increase in the future.

While Vanuatu is at the forefront of shifting the global discourse and dialogue on understanding climate change and its impacts, a lot more still needs to be done. The communities who bear the most direct impact from climate-amplified risks are also often those with the least financial protection, making recovery from recurring and compounding disasters all the more difficult. This often leads to recurring cycles of poverty and other hidden costs such as a growing prevalence of gender-based violence.

Climate finance becomes an important aspect to supporting the resilience of communities so that they can prevent climate events from becoming long drawn-out risks. While increasing the amount of overall funding available is its own important task, it is equally necessary that those funds must flow in ways which directly address the challenges and opportunities of the communities they are meant to assist.



Category 5 Cyclone Pam over Vanuatu, March 13, 2015. NASA images courtesy Jeff Schmaltz, LANCE/EOSDIS MODIS Rapid Response Team at NASA GSFC. NASA VIIRS image by Jesse Allen, using data from the Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership.

The Port Vila *Climate Talk*

To understand the state of climate finance, access, implementation challenges and opportunities and ways to improve it, a Climate Talk workshop was hosted by the German Embassy Canberra in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on 16 April 2026. It was hosted in collaboration with the UK High Commission in Vanuatu, and the Vanuatu Ministry of Climate Change. Discussions were facilitated and organised by La Trobe University's Centre for Global Security and CoTerran.

The broad aim was to discuss Pacific priorities in international climate finance access with key climate finance funds, government stakeholders and internal fund managers, applicants, and recipients. The half-day workshop, followed by an evening reception, brought together over 50 representatives of multilateral climate finance institutions, the Vanuatu government, civil society organisations, community leaders, development partners, the Port Vila diplomatic community, and online participants from across the region.



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This workshop is an opportunity to share knowledge and experience and together find ways to improve access to climate finance.

— Her Excellency
Ms Beate Grzeski,
Ambassador of Germany to
Vanuatu, former Special
Envoy to the Pacific Island
States

Three guiding questions

The goal was not to simply present information, but to have an open dialogue, which revolved around three key questions:

- 01 What international climate finance funds are available?
- 02 What are the future plans of governments and funding institutions to increase access?
- 03 How is climate finance being used through all levels of governance, and what further improvements are needed to increase access?

This report presents the key discussions, messages, and recommendations that emerged from that conversation. It is intended for policymakers, development partners, civil society organisations, and community advocates: anyone with a stake in ensuring that climate finance reaches the people who need it most.



Port Vila Climate Talk, April 16, 2016.

State of climate finance *in Vanuatu*

The Ministry of Climate Change was established in 2014 to align departments and more effectively respond to increased challenges around disaster response and management, and sustainable development of the environment. The Ministry also established a National Advisory Board (NAB), a formal body that reviews and approves climate-related projects in the country so that they are consistent with national priorities. It is meant to be a representative body with relevant stakeholders present, including VANGO, the umbrella body for Vanuatu's civil society organisations, members of the private sector and others. This structure is intended to provide communities a voice in what gets approved so that it reflects a bottom-up approach. Vanuatu also published the world's first national loss and damage policy in 2025, and the current National Adaptation Plan is focusing on developing province-specific plans.

An early climate finance fund, the National Green Energy Fund (NGEF) was established in 2018 and funded initially by the government of Vanuatu. One of the core projects was over 300 solar projects — in schools, health centres, and homes. After the 2023 cyclones, it worked with UN Women to get solar lights, freezers, and sewing machines to 108 women who had lost everything.

International funds and partners

Internationally, the Ministry works directly with large global funds established to aid countries such as Vanuatu respond to climate change. These include the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**, **Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)**, and **Global Environmental Facility (GEF)** — vehicles for climate finance provided by countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom. These large funds are meant to streamline funding through government nodal bodies or third-party agencies to local municipal leaders, communities and civil society partners.

The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), embedded inside the Ministry of Climate Change, has supported the government's efforts along the way, in addition to funding key projects around the country. Their solar water pump programme, for example, has now delivered clean water to more than 20,000 people across 36 rural communities.

Vanuatu's Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) was accredited to the GCF in October 2025, which allows Vanuatu to apply for GCF funding directly. Vanuatu now has six approved GCF projects and, as of early April 2026, its first project was approved through the Adaptation Fund. The GCF is moving closer to the region, with a sub-regional office and permanent presence slated to open in Fiji. Its Pacific portfolio has doubled since 2023 and now exceeds **one billion US dollars**. A new \$43 million project for climate-resilient agriculture in Vanuatu, Tonga, and Samoa, for which half of all direct beneficiaries are women, was approved just weeks before this workshop.

\$1B+

GCF Pacific portfolio — doubled since 2023

6

GCF projects approved for Vanuatu to date

-23%

Drop in global ODA between 2024 and 2025

The Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) is currently being established and working to provide a financing solution focused on the region's unique needs by funding community-level resilience projects. The PRF is specifically designed to reach communities and to work with civil society organisations, complementing existing funds but working to fill gaps that are often left by large funds and organisations.

Access to climate finance in Vanuatu has been the result of sustained effort from many partner organisations over the past decade, but a lot more still needs to be done. There is much proof of progress, but with global finance shrinking, it is also necessary to ensure that existing funds and funding cycles are not wrapped in a cycle of reactive measures. Global official development aid dropped by 23% between 2024 and 2025 — as a result, investments to prepare for a more climate-disrupted future have lessened just when we need them most.

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Fourteen traditional meeting structures — called farea — were destroyed by Cyclone Pam in 2015. More than ten years later, they have not been restored. These structures are not just buildings. They are where communities gather, make decisions, and pass on knowledge.

— WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT, VANUATU CIVIL SOCIETY

Where progress *is needed*

Despite this progress, the workshop highlighted a number of areas where applicants and institutions felt that more progress could be made to improve access and absorption capacity, to ensure that even limited funds are used more effectively. There was a strong focus from participants on the need for systems being simpler and more in line with the capacity of local stakeholders, keeping vulnerable communities at the heart of distribution.

01 Engaging with and informing communities

The communities who need access to climate finance funds are often facing near-term pressures and are not always aware of what funds are available, or the processes to access them. Projects are also not always designed with community needs being fully consulted and assessed. Better communication is not a soft issue — it is what determines whether projects succeed or fail. When information does reach communities, it may not be accessible to applicants without deep technical backgrounds. Civil society organisations and area administrators who live and work in communities are not consistently included in outreach, consultation, or decision-making. Information needs to travel in both directions: from funds to communities, and from communities back to funds — especially in local languages, the lack of which is a constant barrier.

02 Streamlining compliance and improving data access

Funds and donors require data to approve projects, but communities may not always have the means to capture and report on what is required. When applications ask for data that does not exist, communities either cannot apply or must spend scarce time and money trying to generate it. There is also a gap at the system level: no single public source currently shows what climate finance Vanuatu is receiving, which communities it is reaching, and what share is going to women. Without that information, it is impossible to assess where improvements are most needed and understand the gaps that need to be filled.

03 Capacity constraints

Small government departments, community organisations, and civil society groups face a number of accreditation and compliance needs that can exceed their capacity. There also exist numerous barriers related to interpretation of forms that are often generated for a more general audience, and the ability to translate information and knowledge into what a donor partner needs. A government department implementing a climate project may have three or four staff, two of whom are in administrative roles. A community organisation trying to access funding must complete multiple registrations, establish auditable accounts, and find an auditor — which is not always an eligible expense for donor funds. The areas in which funds are delivered are often remote and difficult to access, exponentially raising costs that are not considered suitable within project guidelines, and may not have reliable internet or even network connections.

04 Incorporating community and gender-based knowledge

Communities hold deep knowledge about their land, their climate, and what is needed for long-term resilience, growth and development. This knowledge is not being leveraged as effectively as it could be. Adaptation plans must consider and integrate the perspectives, structures, and practices that have protected communities for generations. Representatives of civil society noted the specific challenges that women in Vanuatu face in response to recurring and intense disasters driven by climate change, where gender-based violence rises in the aftermath of climate-related disasters. It was noted that climate finance tends to veer towards large infrastructure projects as a means of long-term mitigation, often missing focus on short- and medium-term adaptation through small-scale community-led projects — which would need more integration of community and women-led knowledge and networks.



Port Vila Climate Talk panellists sharing remarks, April 16, 2016.

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We want these funds to be managed by local women, so that we won't have any more hungry kids.

— CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPANT

Pathways to *better access*

Five concrete directions emerged from the dialogue — each one tied to a specific friction in how climate finance is designed, distributed, and accounted for. None require new funds. All require willingness.

01 Simplify application processes

Future reforms to application processes should focus on the experience and capacity constraints of organisations and individuals filling them in. Beyond translating materials for the communities seeking to apply, the technical demands (and expertise required) should be considered for communities and organisations without the resources available to secure such funding. This could be in the form of supporting applicants engaging pre-approved service providers at agreed rates and reviewing or considering efforts to alleviate application burden in line with the resources and size of the applicant organisation or community.

02 Reduce accreditation duplication

Civil society organisations often face overlapping registration, audit, and compliance burdens for each fund and project they apply for. Where possible, climate finance institutions should coordinate in regions with low access to financial resources so that accreditation and compliance needs can be streamlined or cross-referenced. If a civil society organisation has already been assessed and approved by one donor, another donor should consider that assessment where feasible to reduce burden at both ends.

03 Support civil society to deepen community participation

National and regional organisations like VANGO (the Vanuatu Association of NGOs), VCAN (the Vanuatu Climate Action Network) or ActionAid Vanuatu are already working in communities across the country. They have the relationships and the trust that international climate finance institutions need to engage with and deliver funds to communities that need them most. Engaging more directly with such organisations can help enhance the flow of funds effectively and bring a much-needed community-intentional lens into long-term climate adaptation. Global evidence notes that such engagement not only reduces the cycles of poverty and the risk of violence but also potentially stems the tide of future dependencies.

04 Work with communities to share data and information

There is currently no single public source that shows what climate finance Vanuatu is receiving, which provinces and sectors it is reaching, and what share is going to women and disadvantaged communities. GGGI and the Ministry of Climate Change are developing this tool. It should be completed, made public, and updated regularly. Transparency is not optional — it is how communities hold systems accountable.

05 Insist on grants, not loans

Pacific island nations, and communities seeking climate finance funding, should not be asked to take on debt in exchange for climate resilience. As global financing tightens, there will be pressure to replace grants with concessional loans in climate finance packages. This must be resisted by donors, international climate funds, and other partners.



Port Vila Climate Talk participants engaging in discussion, April 16, 2016.

A growing gap *and the willingness to close it*

The world is at a critical inflection point in its management of the global climate crisis. The fuel crisis of this year is forcing many countries to contend with their own energy security, and the role that renewable energy may play in not just reducing emissions but enhancing resilience to future shocks. Equally, the attention on short-term geopolitical shocks risks reducing focus on the existential risk that climate change poses for nations across the Pacific. Pacific governments — supported by Germany, the UK, and other partners committed to this work — must use every available forum to hold donor countries to their commitments. The Pacific Pre-COP events, and COP31 in Türkiye, are all critical moments to drive further ambition and momentum this year and beyond.

This workshop highlighted a growing gap between climate finance as it exists on paper and climate finance as it is felt in communities. It is the result of specific choices about how funds are designed and how application processes work, which unintentionally determine which communities are able to access and implement projects. Often these are designed by actors in spaces far removed from recipient reality. While the increased attention and regional presence of various global donors and partners is welcome, they need to be effective without overwhelming. Workshops such as these aid in elevating voices and perspectives from a range of stakeholders that ultimately build and hold community growth and development. What is required is the willingness of partners — whether international funds, donor governments, national institutions, or civil society — to make the changes needed to improve that access.

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Before Vanuatu goes to the world to advocate on climate, we must ensure the communities closest to home are not left behind.

— CLOSING REFLECTION, PORT VILA CLIMATE TALK

ABOUT THIS REPORT

CoTerran and the La Trobe Centre for Global Security, prepared this report through proceedings of the Port Vila Climate Talk held on 16 April 2026.

Workshop video recording available on request.

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

The Climate Talks is a series of public and live-streamed panel discussions hosted by the **German Embassy Canberra** that aim to foster broader understanding and critical debate of important climate issues.