ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE IN VANUATU

Interpreting community perceptions of vulnerability, knowledge and power for community-based adaptation programming.

SEI STOCKHOLM ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE

OXFAM

CONTENTS

Oxfam Australia
132 Leicester Street, Carlton Victoria 3053 Australia
Tel + 61 3 9289 9444 | Fax +61 3 9347 1983
www.oxfam.org.au

Author: Jonathan Ensor, Stockholm Environment Institute, University of York, UK

Designer: Kate Bensen

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This page: Futuna, Vanuatu: A man and his child now have access to clean water thanks to new water tanks and piping installed by the CARE consortium (led by Oxfam) and Australian Aid. Photo: Simon Bradshaw/OxfamAUS.

Front and back cover: Futuna, Vanuatu: Children from the primary school in Herald Bay learn new gardening techniques that they then pass on to their parents. Photo: Simon Bradshaw/OxfamAUS.

PREFACE

The fieldwork for this report was undertaken during November 2014, and the process of writing completed in March 2015, only a few days before Cyclone Pam made landfall. Cyclone Pam was one of the worst disasters seen in the Pacific, destroying homes, crops and livestock.

This report does not address the impact of — or responses to — Cyclone Pam. Despite this, the findings, which explore the most appropriate methods through which to support adaptation and resilience, are perhaps more relevant now than ever. This is also the first of two reports, the second of which will address the post-Cyclone Pam context. At the time of writing, the second piece of work has been commissioned, and preparations for fieldwork are underway in the hope that the findings will be published early in 2016.

This report would not have been produced without the generous support of many individuals and organisations. Oxfam in Vanuatu commissioned the research and provided the financial and logistical means that enabled the work to go ahead, with additional support from the Stockholm Environment Institute at the University of York. Staff from many of the agencies in the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program gave their time without hesitation and willingly offered guidance and their expert knowledge of the context. This contribution is greatly appreciated.

While the number of people involved make it impossible to give due credit to all, particular thanks must go to Daniel Vorbach and Shirley Laban. They provided knowledgeable input into the planning and findings, excellent support throughout the fieldwork and analysis, assistance whenever it was needed, and a continuous supply of coffee and good company.

Forari, Vanuatu: Philemon, community leader, Forari community. Photo: Groovy Banana/OxfamAUS.

SUMMARY: ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE IN VANUATU

The report documents findings from fieldwork in Vanuatu undertaken during November 2014. The intention is to contextualise the resilience building work of the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program within themes that have emerged within the academic literature on climate change adaptation and resilience, and on community-based adaptation in particular. These themes challenge those concerned with adaptation to think more critically about the nature of communities, and to explore how power and politics at different scales (from the local to the global) influence the opportunities for and constraints on adaptation for different members of a community. The resilience perspective pushes understanding of adaptation further, inviting systematic consideration of how programming can address not only climate change impacts, but also how agency and structure can be addressed to empower vulnerable groups in the face of climate change.

The findings draw attention to how vulnerability is defined by multiple interconnected issues that have different significance in the lives of different community members, each of whom have their own perceptions of risk and access to opportunities. While relationships defined by power and cultural norms shape how local risks are understood, prioritised and managed in adaptation decision making processes, a focus on equitable decision making can support the emergence of adaptive capacity that is the basis for future adaptive actions that benefit the whole community. Adaptive capacity also demands opportunities for local people to build their technical and decision making capacities and relationships with external actors. While this is increasingly understood by the agencies working within the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program at the level of rhetoric, it remains for a deeper change in perspective to develop. It will take a significant investment of time if NGOs are to step back and restrict themselves to facilitating community access to information and knowledge as a precursor to informing their own processes of decision making. For the most part, structural issues, which fundamentally limit adaptation and development choices, remain in the background to the projects studied during the fieldwork. The baseline assessments that underpin community-based adaptation must take account of structural issues at multiple scales, and establish whether support for more equitable social, cultural or political change is a necessary part of action on adaptation.

Taken together, this analysis supports the intention of the program to shift community-based adaptation away from its comfort zone. However, agencies will need to work hard to push beyond the familiar focus on climate change impacts and capacity building that supports individual agency, and towards actions that link agency and structure through support for broad-based coalitions for change. In support of this goal, rights-based strategies are proposed to address structural constraints on adaptive capacity. By exploring the mechanisms that underpin marginalisation and exclusion, rights-based approaches enable development actors to support vulnerable communities in seeking reform via social and political processes or through appeal to legal or administrative systems.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is a growing threat to Vanuatu, and community-based climate assessments have recorded increasing temperatures, changed rainfall patterns and rising sea levels. This research is concerned with how development and humanitarian agencies have aimed to increase the resilience of women and men in Vanuatu to the unavoidable impacts of climate change, and is focused on context in which this work has taken place and the methods that have been adopted. The work of the agencies is guided by the Community Resilience Framework (below) which connects members of the consortium in the "Yumi stap redi long climate change" program– The Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program, led by Oxfam in Vanuatu. In framing their work around the concept of resilience, the program is connecting with a growing body of thought about what resilience means in the context of global environmental change, and how it can be supported in practice.

THE RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

A resilient community in Vanuatu:

1. Has their basic needs met, so they are healthy and safe;
2. Can build their livelihoods on a diverse range of material assets and know how to best utilise and improve their value and sustainability in a way that provides equitable access and control across the community, including shelter, land, water, natural resources, financial assets has strong social structures that support its members in times of need;
3. Has leadership and decision making processes that are fair, inclusive and responsive to the needs of the whole communityincluding women, young people and vulnerable groups that can plan for current and future needs that fosters belonging and connection;
4. Has access to relevant information, both traditional and external, and can use this to their advantage — this means the mechanisms for all community members to access and share information they need are in place;
5. Is supportive and open to innovation and new ideas, and has the leadership that is flexible and forward looking;
6. Has a belief system and culture that can help understand and act on shocks and changes, and foster relationships between the natural environment, social and cultural systems;
7. Has social networks that extend beyond the immediate community, so that it can draw on knowledge, resources and new ideas; and
8. Has governments at different levels that are connected, listen to and are responsive to community needs, is innovative, has strong leadership and is transparent and accountable.

The Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program is a consortium comprising Oxfam in its role as lead agency, Save the Children, CARE International in Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centres Association (VRDTCA), the Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) [supported by the French Red Cross (FRC)], and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The program is implemented in eight islands across four provinces, as illustrated in the map to the right.


Tegua
Mot aiava
Vanua Lava
TORBA
Gaua
SANMA
Luganville
Ambae
PENAMA
VANUATU
MALAMPA
SHEFA
Pacific Ocean
SHEFA
PORT-VILA
Efate
TAFEA
Futuna
Tanna
NEW CALEDONIA
The Vanuatu Climate Change Adaptation Program
OXFAM
care
Save the Children
Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centres Association
The Vanuatu Red Cross Society
giz
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

This report is based on research undertaken in four locations: with communities in Tafea Province on the island of Futuna in the south, and in Torba Province on the islands of Motalava and Vanua Lava in the north, along with agencies in the capital, Port Vila. Research was undertaken between 3-21 November 2014. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews were used in each location to explore perceptions of risk and vulnerability, and of the distribution of power, knowledge and resources in relation to individuals, communities, and local and more distant institutions and organisations.

Focus groups disaggregated communities into women, men and young people, drawing on opportunities provided by discussions convened for the formal project evaluation (which was undertaken alongside this research). Key informants were sought from those directly involved in the project, and from those within the community who had less engagement but were able to provide different perspectives on the local context (for example, community members, local health workers, a local entrepreneur or teacher). These informants were identified in discussion with local project staff, through snowballing from the focus groups, as a result of information gained during the research process.

While the number of interviews and discussions are similar (Table 1), more time was spent in Futuna (three days) than Motalava (two days) or Vanualava (two days). In Vanualava, only challenges with transport meant that there was only one day in the village of Vatrata, with the remaining time spent in the provincial capital (Sola). This time was used to secure interviews with officials working at the provincial level. This balance of village level data is reflected in the results presented in the following sections.

Table 1: breakdown of research

	FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS			KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS		
	MALE	FEMALE	MIXED	MALE	FEMALE	
Futuna (Mission Bay & Harald Bay)	2	2	2	6	2	14
Mota Lava (Nereningman)	1	1	–	5	3	10
Vanualava (Vatrata & Sola)	1	1	–	3	5	10
	4	**4**	**2**	**14**	**10**	**34**
NGO representatives				3	3	6
	4	**4**	**2**	**17**	**13**	**40**

The findings in this report reflect the views expressed by participants. These views and explanations are, therefore, the subjective perceptions of those touched by the program or living in the communities where the program has taken place. However, the intention of this report is to contextualize the resilience building work of the Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program within themes that have emerged within the academic literature on climate change adaptation and resilience, and on community-based adaptation in particular. This literature critically engages with the theory and practice of adaptation and can help aid reflections on how adaptation work is framed and rolled out in Vanuatu. At the same time, the experiences of communities and agencies working in Vanuatu have much to offer in terms of evidence and challenges to current academic thinking.

In keeping with these observations, this report adopts the following structure. The next section introduces the conceptual framework of the paper, discussing how the themes of understanding communities; power, politics and adaptive capacity; and resilience and transformation can help to untangle the complexities of adaptation interventions that focus on the local scale. These themes challenge those concerned with adaptation to think more critically about the nature of communities, and to explore how power and politics at different scales (from the local to the global) influence the opportunities for and constraints on adaptation for different members of a community. The resilience perspective pushes understanding of adaptation further, inviting systematic consideration of how programming can address not only climate change impacts, but also how agency and structure can be addressed to empower vulnerable groups in the face of climate change. These three themes are adopted to structure the main body of the report, which reflects on research findings.

In three chapters, the focus gradually broadens.

- First, in the chapter 'Understanding communities', there is specific consideration of the complex web of issues and challenges that create patterns of vulnerability within and between communities living on the islands.
- Second, in the chapter 'Power, politics and adaptive capacity', the focus shifts to explore how power and knowledge are shared between communities and those public and private actors they interact with, and how the program has sought to influence these relationships to build adaptive capacity.
- Finally, in the chapter 'Resilience and transformation', the focus shifts to how the resilience framework has helped to influence the design of projects within the program, and potential ways to engage more directly with the structuring of access knowledge and resources in Vanuatu.

The paper concludes by highlighting ten key lessons that have emerged from the findings.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION, RESILIENCE AND TRANSFORMATION

Communities have emerged as an important focus for climate change adaptation actions. The reason for this lies in the nature of adaptation, and how it differs from climate change mitigation. Mitigation presents largely similar challenges in many different contexts — that is, how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from different sectors, such as electricity generation, transport and food production. While it is the responsibility of developed countries to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the solutions to the challenge of mitigation (such as solar panels, wind turbines or electric vehicles) are found in use all over the world. The challenge of adaptation contrasts sharply with this picture.

The impacts of climate change that people experience look different, everywhere. Changes in rainfall, temperature, extreme events and seasonal onset are anticipated globally, but with significant regional and local variation. The consequences of these changes also vary profoundly. For example, rising temperatures may mean the spread of malarial mosquitos into new areas, a fall in yield from traditional crops, or the loss of potable water sources. In some locations (such as on floodplains) heavier rainfall may bring regular and catastrophic flooding, while in others the same change in rainfall may gradually affect livelihoods, as important nutrients leach from the soil. In urban areas with effective drainage, there may be little noticeable effect, while nearby slums or squatter settlements experience deteriorations in health and infrastructure due to increased run-off.

These differences in impacts mean that adaptation actions must respond to the particular context in which climate change is experienced. However, what is clear is that those who are directly dependent on the natural environment for their livelihoods or wellbeing are among the most vulnerable to climate change. This includes the majority of people in the developing world. But impacts will be highly localised and experienced by people with shared livelihood activities or resource dependencies. For this reason, 'communities' are often taken to be an appropriate scale of focus for adaptation efforts, and toolkits for 'community-based adaptation' have become part of development practice. The strength of community-based adaptation is that it responds to the significance of climate change in communities, drawing on local knowledge to address climate change impacts through grassroots development interventions. While frequently bringing information from external sources (such as climate science), it is "a community-led process, based on communities' priorities, needs, knowledge and capacities" (Reid et al., 2009), in the best cases yielding responses that are specific and appropriate to the social and environmental context.

Community-based adaptation (CBA) interventions have been the subject of considerable and growing interest in recent years. The rise in popularity of CBA among the practitioner community (Ensor and Berger, 2009; Mitchell and Tanner, 2006; Schipper et al., 2014) has been mirrored in an increasing body of critical reflections in the academic literature (e.g. Dodman and Mitlin, 2011; Spires et al., 2014; Forsyth, 2013). These different perspectives offer important insights into the potential of (and potential problems with) CBA. Many of these reflections are concerned with how 'communities' are understood, and whether or not the community scale is a helpful way in which to focus adaptation actions. The following three sections introduce important themes that emerge from this literature. These three themes are then used to structure findings from Vanuatu in the main body of the report.

1. UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES

In focusing on the challenges that climate change presents to communities it is easy to forget that this is only one cause of vulnerability, inseparable from other cultural, political, economic, environmental and development factors. Studies exploring the politics of community-based adaptation look to unravel this context, to better understand the causes of climate change vulnerability, and the motivations for and consequences of adaptation interventions. This literature highlights how communities are made up of individuals who are faced with differing opportunities and constraints in relation to their livelihoods and wellbeing. This view suggests that communities are better defined by the relationships between diverse individuals, than as a group with similar characteristics — an observation that has led some to question the value and validity of the term 'community'. At the same time, the drivers of vulnerability are often found outside of the community — they are national and regional, as well as local. Different community members will experience these drivers in different ways. So even when adaptation is community-based, it is necessary to look beyond the community to understand the causes of vulnerability and risk.

These observations have important consequences for CBA in Vanuatu. The diversity of individuals in particular communities can be seen in their differing vulnerabilities, the different challenges they face, and the different priorities they express when asked about changes they would make in their lives. While there are common concerns within and between islands, each individual has his or her own perception of vulnerability, made up from a mosaic of factors. One consequence of these differences is that not all members of a community face similar challenges from climate change. Some will gain more than others from adaptation actions that focus on particular risks. So, when adaptation interventions are planned it is important to ask: who gets to define who is at risk? Who identifies what the significant risks are in a particular setting?

This places the onus on practitioners to fully understand the needs of different sections of the community in relation to climate change, as well as to explore the extent to which it is possible to address vulnerability through an exclusive focus on livelihoods and capacities within the community. Decision making processes determine whose risk, and whose resilience, is addressed through adaptation actions, drawing in questions of power relationships within the community, and between communities and the intervening NGO. Whose voice gets heard, and who wins and loses in these encounters?

2. POWER, POLITICS AND ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

Recognising that the way adaptation unfolds is shaped by politics — that is, by relations of power and processes of decision making — means accepting that intervening NGOs are implicated in sustaining or reforming local patterns of inequality, regardless of whether or not this is explicitly part of their agenda. Adaptation interventions occur in a context with existing patterns of power and vulnerability, which will, at least in part, determine the distribution of costs and benefits. At the same time, intervening NGOs are in positions of power relative to communities, and the focus of their knowledge and resources will influence both the adaptation actions, and distribution of benefit. Process (who is engaged in adaptation interventions, and how) is fundamental in determining how these inequalities are navigated, and as such is at least as significant an outcome (for example, the application of new soil management techniques or water harvesting technologies).

In community-based adaptation the implications of this view are significant, not only because it casts NGOs as agents of social change, but also because there are inequalities in terms of the ability to adapt to future climate change. Evidence from case studies suggests that adaptation interventions at the community scale are frequently focused more on meeting today's short-term challenges than addressing how communities will respond to ongoing climate change (Ensor and Berger, 2009; Ludi et al., 2014). Yet the reality of continuing changes in climate, the degree of uncertainty that is inherent in climate change projections, and the complex relationship between climate change impacts and the local context, all mean that adaptive actions are going to be necessary into the future. In this context, adaptive capacity must become a key consideration in community-based adaptation.

The focus of adaptive capacity is on the potential for individuals and communities to respond to, shape, and create changes. As such, it can be understood as the preconditions necessary for adaptive actions (Nelson et al., 2007), but goes beyond physical assets to include the nature of decision making, flexibility in responding to change, and access to knowledge and learning needed in communities if they are to make adjustments in response to changes that may be outside previous experience. A growing body of literature focuses on identifying specific social and economic conditions that influence the capacity of an individual or community to adapt (e.g. Engle, 2011; Folke, 2003; Marshall et al., 2013; Tschakert et al., 2014; Wise et al., 2014), highlighting how inequalities, marginalisation and exclusion at different scales determine differences in adaptive capacity at the local level (Ensor et al., 2015).

3. RESILIENCE AND TRANSFORMATION

Resilience is equally caught up in the politics of adaptation. The CBA literature frequently refers to the aim of resilience building, usually (Forsyth, 2013) meaning the increased ability to deal with uncertainty and risk (Reid et al., 2009). A more detailed definition of resilience is found in relation to 'social-ecological systems'– that is, in thinking about how people live within their physical environment. The 'systems' perspective draws attention to the many complex ways in which people shape their environment (for example, through building houses, planting crops or drawing water from rivers) while, at the same time, the environment shapes the way that people live (for example, through the ability to access clean water, the productivity of soils, or frequent exposure to torrential rainfall). In this view, resilience refers to (Walker and Salt, 2006):

> "the capacity of the social-ecological system to continue to provide the goods and services that support a desirable quality of life in face of external disturbances."

If a disturbance (such as a change to the rainfall rate due to climate change) causes a fundamental change (such as the inability to grow cash crops, forcing a shift into poverty or alternative livelihoods) then the resilience of the system has been breached. Increasing resilience means increasing the capacity of the social-ecological system to cope with disturbances. Adaptive capacity, therefore, describes the ability of actors to influence resilience by making changes in their social and/or ecological environment. If adaptive capacity is adequate, then information about climate change (for example, the increasing likelihood of high intensity rainfall) can lead to better early warning systems for flooding, and the introduction of check dams or forest cover reduce run-off. In this way, adaptive capacity can increase resilience, but only if the access to information, knowledge, skills and resources are sufficient.

Building resilience, however, is not always the most appropriate target for development. For example, in southeastern Zimbabwe in the 1980s, many with cattle ranching livelihoods converted their holdings to attract ecotourism following trade, drought frequency and ecosystem changes (Walker et al., 2004). Here, the target was not building resilience to protect livelihoods. Rather, there was a deliberate transformation of livelihoods, which included transformations of the local landscape and economic systems. This involved overcoming the resilience of the existing system through the mobilisation of adaptive capacity.

In other circumstances, resilience may be desirable for some but not for others. This can be a particular problem for individuals or communities who are marginalised from decision making (and who are also often the most vulnerable to climate change). Those without access to adequate representation in decision making processes can see the perpetuation of inequitable social or economic systems. For example, at the local scale, the interests of disabled people may be routinely overlooked, reinforcing their vulnerability through a lack of access to appropriate livelihood opportunities or support. At a broader scale, national or global economic systems may prioritise the interests of those with access to capital, undermining the livelihoods of subsistence communities. The resilience of such systems is highly undesirable from the perspective of those who are marginalised within them. At the same time, the adaptive capacity of such groups is frequently undermined through inadequate access to resources, information or support (Ensor et al. 2015).

4. SUMMARY: A SPECTRUM OF ADAPTATION ACTIONS

A focus on resilience and adaptive capacity shifts adaptation thinking beyond 'first generation' approaches in which technical interventions were designed in response to particular climate change impacts (Burton et al., 2002). First generation responses can be seen as one end of a spectrum of possible adaptation actions, where the focus is on climate impacts, and adaptations are designed to absorb those impacts in order to secure the stability of existing livelihoods (Figure 1). Recognition of the ongoing uncertainty of climate change has prompted increasing attention on adaptation capacity. This has meant looking for adaptations that enable flexibility through attention to agency, or the ability of actors to continuously make changes in their own livelihoods. This marriage of stability and flexibility to enable continuous adjustments is the aim of many recent examples of community-based adaptation practice, where the focus on NGOs has been on both impacts and agency in a bid to support the resilience of communities (Ensor, 2014). Where community-based adaptation has been less strong is in relation to recognising and responding to the structural constraints that limit individual agency (Dodman and Mitlin, 2011).

A focus on structure politicises adaptation, as it draws attention to social, political and economic factors that underpin the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities. In many settings, there are existing social movements or grassroots organisations that are looking to secure changes to inequitable systems in favour of marginalised communities. In such cases, a focus on structure may imply that NGOs concerned with adaptation support and work alongside such movements (Dodman and Mitlin, 2011; Ensor et al., 2015). However, even where overt political action in favour of transformation is inappropriate, structure continues to play a role. As discussed above, the processes of power, exclusion and marginalisation shape differences in vulnerability, adaptive capacity and access to decision making, and as such are implicated in determining the outcome of all adaptation interventions. As the findings in this report illustrate, one important challenge for NGOs is to build internal capacity and adopt ways of working that enable structure to be accounted for alongside agency and climate change impacts in community-based adaptation.

The following sections draw on interviews undertaken in Vanuatu in relation to perceptions of vulnerability, power relationships and decision making, in order to explore and illustrate these issues in context.

Figure 1: A spectrum of adaptation actions (adapted from Béné et al., 2014; Pelling et al., 2014).

Photo: Rodney Dekker/OxfamAUS

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES

Framing the adaptation context in Vanuatu in terms of communities that are vulnerable to climate change is not straightforward. Communities experience differences in vulnerability experienced within and between the islands, and are exposed to sources of vulnerability that arise independently from climate change. This section summarises the views of individuals on issues that present challenges to life in Futuna, Vanua Lava and Mota Lava. These perspectives are explored in relation to how three key themes (multiple dimensions of vulnerability, local inequalities, and cross scale relationships) operate to connect diverse issues in the lives of community members, complicating our understanding of community-based adaptation in important ways.

Three topics were raised by a number of people on each island. First, access to cash is a common concern, in particular for the payment of school fees. However, while the ability to access cash is a consistent problem, the opportunities vary with context. For example,

- in Futuna, fish, baskets and other handicrafts are sold on to other islands via the small aircraft that land at Mission Bay;
- in Mota Lava a few families are able to rely on tourism but the majority, as in Vanua Lava, still principally rely on copra, but the price is now too low to provide a meaningful income;
- in Vanua Lava the community also reported problems with the copra rotting at the dockside while waiting for the ship to transport it on for processing.

Second, on each island, community members expressed interest in the establishment of a local market, to sell crops (Futuna and Vanua Lava) or lobster and prawns to the provincial capital (Sola, Mota Lava) or reduce reliance on the boat for access to the food market in Tanna (Futuna). Thirdly, in different ways gender was raised as a common issue on the islands. On Futuna, widows and especially those with children were identified as particularly vulnerable, as they were on Vanua Lava where access to land for women was also raised as a challenge. An interview with a representative of the Vanuatu Women's Centre on Mota Lava raised the issue of violence against women. The representative identified violence against women as an endemic problem on Mota Lava and understood it to be the case across all the islands.

There were also differences between the islands: in Futuna particularly, but also in Vanua Lava, the irregular and unreliable nature of the ship (which is relied on to bring food and resources such as building materials, and take copra for processing) was raised by many. The significance of the ship as a cost effective means to connect the islands (compared to travel by aircraft or private boat) was made clear, as was the increasing unreliability of the ship. This was linked to the collapse of price for copra and the need for the ship to both bring saleable goods and take goods away from the islands to be viable. In Futuna, this was in turn linked to the lack of a local market for the ship's goods to be sold into. In Mota Lava, the challenge of water scarcity during the driest months — which resulted in communities relocating for several months of the year — had recently been overcome through the introduction of a reservoir and water pipes to each of the villages by the Red Cross.

While in the background on all islands, on Mota Lava the issue of land disputes was raised as a constant concern, limiting the ability to take actions such as planting and generating debilitating conflicts between or within families. The nurse posted to Mission Bay, Futuna, expressed particular concern about malnutrition and respiratory infections due to smoke inhalation, while others on Futuna drew attention to the remoteness, poor soils and lack of water access as factors that combine to make life hard and drive Futunese to migrate to Tanna or on to Port Vila in search of alternative livelihoods. On Mota Lava, where the Red Cross had provided climate change training, those close to the coast without access to inland areas were identified as vulnerable, and the damage to yam, manioc and taro from too much sunshine were noted as challenges linked to climate change. Finally, on Futuna and Vanua Lava, engagement in community and church work and meetings were identified as reducing the time available for subsistence and income generating activities, underpinning vulnerability.

These different challenges go some way towards describing the complex context in which development activities and climate change impacts play out in Vanuatu, and will be returned to in the following sections. Importantly, evident here are three aspects of vulnerability that Dodman and Mitlin (2011) suggest can be overlooked in community-based adaptation, as discussed below.

1. MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF VULNERABILITY

Climate change impacts in Vanuatu are perceived locally in terms of their interaction with multiple existing vulnerabilities and livelihood challenges, such as those outlined above. Common challenges across islands, such as the need for cash income, may be exacerbated if climate change alters cash crop production. However, the underlying issues that drive the need for cash (money needed for school fees, lack of access to markets) are drivers of vulnerability that are independent of climate change. Many issues are implicated in multiple challenges experienced on the islands. This can be illustrated through the lens of a single issue such as land, which underpins food production, is required for some adaptation actions, is relatively inaccessible to women, and is a source of dispute. Yet this is only the starting point for a much more complex set of relationships.

For example, a number of interconnected factors are implicated in (mal)nutrition. Land (and the time to farm) is required for food production, which provides the basis for local nutrition. Climate change is implicated in changing growing conditions at different elevations, but access to land varies between individuals, as do commitments to time-consuming community and church activities (such as committee membership or leadership responsibilities). Some crops may be sold, depending on local market access and/or the presence of the inter-island ship. The cash income that results enables food purchase, which — depending on which foodstuffs are bought and are sold — may increase food availability but often has a negative impact on nutrition (a high dependency on purchased rice is identified as a key source of nutritional problems). Tourism provides a further source of cash income, with impacts on nutrition in terms of the ability to buy food (depending on market access, and whether or not nutritious food is purchased) but also the availability of nutritious local food (such as scarce vegetables) if this is diverted away from families and towards sustaining the tourism business.

This example illustrates how it becomes difficult to isolate symptoms and drivers of vulnerability and, in particular, how the impact of climate change on nutrition cannot be understood to act independently from multiple pre-existing dimensions of vulnerability.

2. LOCAL INEQUALITIES

Not everyone in a community is equally susceptible to the different challenges outlined above. One respondent on Futuna suggested that the strongest (that is, least vulnerable) people on the island had businesses (such as shops), good access to quality land, and/or were fishers with access to the deep sea — in each case suggesting reliable access to sources of subsistence and cash income. For the same reason, women, single women and single women with children were generally perceived as vulnerable (listed here in terms of increasing vulnerability). Disabled people were also consistently reported to be particularly vulnerable. Indeed, observations of the challenges faced by disabled people, violence against women and widespread land disputes all warn against representing communities in "overly romantic terms" (Forsyth 2013: 442).

The distribution of benefits from opportunities such as deep sea fishing and tourism is also uneven, with those with the skills and capital to make investments in canoes or bungalows best able to take advantage — and, as in the case of one respondent who owned a bungalow on Mota Lava, further capitalise on the access to tourists through the sale of home-made handicrafts. Inequalities can also be hard to identify and establish, such as in the case of incomers on Futuna and Mota Lava. On each island some respondents reported that incomers had poorer access to resources (Mota Lava) or faced social isolation (Futuna).[1] The difference between individuals is also apparent in their perceptions of local challenges. For example, on Mota Lava, when asked about local issues, a village chief suggested that 'everyone has access to land' and that cash income is the main concern, while a local teacher, in response to the same question, identified land disputes as the biggest challenge, dividing families over access to productive gardens and houses: "the disputes go as far as the sea."

The difference in these responses may derive from differentiation in interests (the chief, as arbiter of local disputes, has a stake in their successful resolution) and individual perceptions of local priority issues (residents affected by disputes may value their resolution above longer-term concerns for cash income, particular if they have access to waged employment). Development interventions that address cash income or land disputes will, accordingly, have unequal consequences for different community members.

1 This was not directly established as these individuals were not available for interview.

3. CROSS-SCALE RELATIONSHIPS

Many of the issues raised by community members draw in considerations that have their roots outside the local community, calling into question the appropriateness of an exclusively local scale of focus. The need for cash income derives in no small part from the fall in copra prices, which is passed on from global markets to local farmers via traders that visit the islands. Community members have no influence over the price that is set in markets that are geographically distant and in institutions from which they are isolated in terms of communication and market power. The fall in income has an impact on (for example) the ability to meet school fees, which themselves arise from the policies of the central government of Vanuatu. Government policy emerges from a national politics of distribution of meagre tax revenues in relation to different aspects of social infrastructure. Vanuatu's status as a tax haven and its relationship, including the priorities it communicates, to the international donor community connects national politics to international and global scale agendas.

Many islanders referred to the ship as being critical to supporting their access to income, and the unreliability of the ship as a major challenge. The ship itself is intrinsically cross-scale: it has a national reach, linking remote communities to the main provincial and national centres. The economics of the ship depend on the demand for, and price of, goods (including copra) set beyond the community (and often beyond Vanuatu) as well as the cost of fuel and the presence or absence of government subsidy. Land issues are often manifested and resolved locally, at the family scale, but may also require actions by the village chief, the island (paramount) chief, or through the legal system framed by national legislation and the will of the Malvatu Mauri (National Council of Chiefs).

4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES

In total, views expressed by interviewees illustrate the significance of a broad and deep understanding of context when planning adaptation actions in Vanuatu — a message that is equally relevant in other contexts across the world. Vulnerability is defined by multiple interconnected issues that have different significance in the lives of different community members, each of whom have their own perceptions of risk and access to opportunities. This context defies assertions of simple cause and effect relationships between development interventions and their outcomes for individuals, and it is particularly problematic to attempt to aggregate those outcomes across an entire, diverse community. The interconnections between communities and actors and processes at higher scales are highly significant (shaping fundamental opportunities and constraints at the community scale) and often highly unequal (profoundly influencing community lives, without themselves being readily susceptible to community influence).

These understandings point to a danger that in undertaking community-based adaptation actions, attention is shifted away from "national and transnational economic and political forces" (Dodman and Mitlin 2011: np), while participatory techniques that have the potential to uncover many of the social, political and economic dimensions of vulnerability are instead "used uncritically, or even misused in order to achieve fast, rather than representative, understandings of local risk" (Forsyth 2013: 442).

Futuna, Vanuatu: A woman catches fish in the shallows near Mission Bay. Futuna's steep terrain, rocky soils, isolation and exposure to cyclones make for a challenging way of life. Photo: Simon Bradshaw/OxfamAUS.

POWER, POLITICS AND ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

In the above, vulnerability is recognised to be unequally distributed, multidimensional, and with drivers that cut across scales. However, development has long recognised how vulnerability is also related to individual differences in influence and capacity to effect change. Studies of the politics of community-based adaptation practice draw on this legacy, highlighting how cultural and power relations shape how local risks are understood, prioritised and managed in adaptation decision making processes (Granderson, 2014, Artur and Hilhorst, 2012; Ayers, 2011; Yates, 2012). Yates (2014: 29) counsels that we need "more nuanced understandings of communities as networks that are structured by unequal power relations and unequal access to knowledge, resources and decision making."

The notion of 'community' can be a barrier to making this step: community suggests an homogenous entity capable of fair decision making. Indeed, local decision making frequently leads to iniquitous outcomes, and it has been shown for participatory resource management that it is a false assumption that "if the spaces for decision making are local, and the rules for access and distribution fair, then all parties will potentially be able to participate and benefit" (Cleaver 2009, quoted in Dodman and Mitlin 2011). In the absence of participatory processes that address individual motivations and identities, and look to rework underlying social and cultural relations, power operates to reinforce existing access to and benefits of decision making (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2004).

1. POWER RELATIONS AND DECISION MAKING

The work of Care in Futuna shows evidence of this sort of direct engagement with existing structures of power and decision making. Care's deliberate targeting of women's participation through a detailed Gender Action Plan addresses multiple forms of marginalisation and exclusion. Measures include: providing an enabling environment for women's participation in planning meetings (appropriate times of day, women only sessions, female facilitators); ensuring women's access to technical inputs, land and appropriate tools; providing gender-specific training, including leadership and management training and support for women; ensuring women as well as men take leadership roles; working with community leaders to ensure women are included; addressing Kastom[2] challenges to women's participation[3]; training women and men on project monitoring; training community health workers on the role of women in health and nutrition; and ensuring scenario planning considers impacts on both women and men.

By addressing cultural, social and technical barriers to participation and providing space for women's knowledge and voice to emerge in the project, there is evidence perceptions of gender are starting to change; as one (male) respondent stated, "including women is different to the traditional way of doing things, but this is changing." Interviewees confirmed that women were coming together to make decisions through the project, and men were learning that women can lead at all levels. For participants in a women's focus group, this was evidence of a change in culture, towards one in which men help women more and share responsibility in the home and gardens. While these are positive signs of an emerging shift in gender relations at the household and community level, a note of caution remains necessary. Respondents also identified the cultural context as one in which participation is synonymous with the ability to attend meetings, and not necessarily with voice. In the presence of such norms, an increase in women's participation needs careful interrogation to ensure it is not simply a ceding of ground as a cover for retention of decision making power.

There is undoubtedly more still to be done if longstanding relationships are to be permanently reworked to provide women with a more equitable position in household and communal life, the more so as these relations are rooted in culture, tradition and institutions such as the church and village councils. However, there is a marked contrast with experiences of NGO interventions on Mota Lava, where in the absence of an explicit gender equity focus, and in the presence of such poor gender relations that violence against women is endemic, gender roles have remained sharply defined at the end of the project. For example, women do not hold decision making roles in project planning and management committees, and have been excluded from technical training on the upkeep of communal water standpipes.[4]

The contrast between the approaches on the two islands raises an important question: what is adaptation for? While it is necessary to address the impacts of climate change, addressing these impacts — or any other development challenge — through technical interventions that overlook entrenched power relations are highly likely to reinforce existing power relations, as benefits accrue to those best placed to take advantage. While in any context there is a constant process of negotiation and change in relationships of power, the benefits of new resources tend to follow local structural relations at a given point in time. A narrow view of community-based adaptation, in which the focus is restricted to remedial actions that aim to reverse the undesirable consequences of environmental change, will ultimately reinforce the relations of power that helped structure vulnerability in the first place. As Pelling (2011: 3) suggests:

> "Climate change adaptation is an opportunity for social reform, for the questioning of values that drive inequalities … But this outcome is by no means certain and growing evidence suggests that too often adaptation is imagined as a non-political, technological domain".

2. ADAPTIVE CAPACITY AND POWER SHARING

This presents a challenge and an opportunity for community-based adaptation. The challenge lies in moving beyond a short term view of adaptation and, in Pelling's (2011: 3) words, beyond seeing adaptation "as a non-political, technological domain". Through a focus on equitable processes, adaptation interventions can shift relations of power — expanding participation in decision making, increasing access to information and securing opportunities to generate knowledge based on action and learning. In this way, interventions that deliver adaptations today can support the emergence of adaptive capacity that is the basis for future adaptive actions that benefit the whole community.

The experiences of adaptation interventions in Vanuatu provides evidence to suggest that the emergence of adaptive capacity has been supported through NGO projects, but also illustrate the difficulties that can arise (including those that are particular to remote island contexts). As noted, shifts in gender relations on Futuna have expanded opportunities for women to be involved in decision making, including through supporting their capacity for leadership and management through targeted training. Importantly, men report a change in their perception of women, and a similar result has followed the close integration and support for the involvement of people living with disabilities. These are positive first steps, even though they may not be indicative of a fundamental change in cultural norms or patterns of local decision making (exclusively male participation in decision making at the Nakamal — the traditional meeting place — is still the norm; women report increased representation of their views by their husbands as a result of more equitable relations in the household). Significantly, the project worked through a committee that is intended to last beyond the life of the project, and respondents reported that the inclusion of women in these decision making spaces has started to shift traditional norms of exclusion. These changes support adaptive capacity to the extent that these aspects of the intervention have firstly, enabled broader participation in spaces that make decisions over adaptive actions; and secondly, will be sustained so that there is a space for future adaptation decision making.

2 Traditional system of culture and governance

3 For example, women would not be able to access community gardens if yam were planted.

4 Work to provide water via village standpipes was coordinated by the Red Cross, but took place prior to the coming together of the consortium for The Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program.

The Futuna project also provided an important opportunity for strengthening relationships with the provincial level decision makers via the Agriklaemaptesen Festival, which looked to promote traditional and climate smart agriculture in Futuna Island. Respondents were enthusiastic about the festival as an opportunity to learn, but also impressed by the opportunity it provided to represent community needs (exemplified by the chief speaking out, demanding to know why NGOs can help them when apparently government representatives cannot).

While opening spaces for broad participation in adaptation decision making is an important step forward, it is also important to question the balance between the knowledge and perceptions of the different interests in the local community, NGOs and other external experts. The critical adaptation literature contains many examples of how — knowingly or unknowingly — the experience, identity, values and worldview of particular actors come to dominate in adaptation decision making. As noted by Granderson (2014: 5):

> "There are different ways of knowing and interpreting climate change risks that suggest an array of responses … Different interpretations implicitly empower some as experts while excluding other knowledges and practices."

3. ADAPTIVE CAPACITY: KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIMENTATION

A key strength of CBA generally, and the projects on the three islands in particular, lies in bringing together community and external knowledge. Yet there is a perception among all the communities that the choice of technologies or adaptation approach was driven by the NGO (for example, in terms of the technologies — which vegetables or trees — in Futuna and Mota Lava, or in how community consultation led to adaptation decision making by the NGO in Mota Lava). Ultimately, it must be recognised that it takes both a change in perspective and a significant investment in time if NGOs are to step back and restrict themselves to facilitating community access to information and knowledge as a precursor to informing their own processes of decision making (e.g. Lewins et al., 2007; Murwira et al., 2000).

The payoff of such an approach is that it builds the technical and decision making capacities, and the relationships with external actors that can bring information or support. Both of these are central if communities are to continue to make informed adaptation decisions, including addressing the unexpected outcomes that inevitably flow from any intervention or change (such as: the land access and flood control implications of increased use of sloping land and water as vegetable gardens expand on Futuna; the presence of new pests in the new crops planted in Futuna; the differences in use of communal water between individual households and bungalow or kava bar owners on Mota Lava; or the ability of elderly or disabled residents to access the communal standpipes on Mota Lava).

There are many positive ways in which the interventions engendered a capacity to explore and experiment with new ideas, which is fundamental if the islanders are to be able to undertake future adaptations. Many respondents reported how the projects had given them new ideas and expanded their thinking about what was possible on the islands ("I

never thought it was possible to grow food here" — Futuna). In Futuna there was support for 'learning through doing' — that is, enabling people to experiment with new ideas — while on Mota Lava there was evidence of individuals going beyond the lessons of the project to experiment with their own ideas (for example, placing coconut stems to guide flood waters). The Futuna Festival provided significant knowledge sharing opportunities, allowing the community to profile their knowledge and skills but also bringing external thinking to the community in the form of demonstrations and training sessions.

The chance to showcase — and compete — at the festival provided additional motivation for residents to engage with the project. However, motivational issues, and a broad reticence to engage with new thinking, were reported on both Futuna and Mota Lava in terms of a reluctance to immediately engage with project ideas (Mota Lava) and in waiting to see how well neighbours fared before becoming involved (Futuna). A need to minimise risk when experimenting with new ideas was also recognised on both islands (for example, through providing communal demonstration plots — itself a challenge on both islands where land access and control is always a background issue). These observations resonate with reports from community-based adaptation globally (Ensor and Berger 2009), and in particular with work done on the Vanuatu Torres Islands. Research on Torres suggests that the islanders need to 'see' initiatives working before they will adopt them (Warrick 2011). On Futuna, respondents observed that those who had been exposed to life on other islands were more likely to engage with the project, lending credence to the more general applicability of Warrick's Torres Islands findings (2011: 25):

> "Community change agents are generally those who are more accepting of new knowledge. These individuals tend to have spent time outside the Torres Islands or have spouses who are from other provinces. They tend to have higher levels of education or have children with high levels of education … people who have left the Torres and come back have a broadened world view — they have a view of both the modern and traditional world and therefore can better see how to effectively integrate the two. They are less likely to reject new ideas because of fear that they will erode existing knowledge. "

Important, positive lessons emerge from these experiences in Futuna and Mota Lava. Learning is an essential component of adaptation, as without the ability to act differently it will be impossible to face the novel challenges presented by climate change. Despite some reticence, there was willingness among residents on both islands to engage with learning, and on both islands the experience of working together on the projects helped resolve local conflicts and build capacity for future collective action. Other lessons for the future interventions include the motivation provided by the festival and the potential for some community members to be nurtured as 'change agents', from whom others in the community can learn and gain confidence in the new ways of working. The festival provided an important source of new ideas, and plans for future festivals are potentially a major contribution to adaptive capacity in terms of sustainable access to climate change adaptation knowledge.

However, this needs to be understood in a context where relationships to knowledge providers outside of the island communities are poor. Respondents on Futuna and Mota Lava confirmed that government and provincial officers hold knowledge that is valued by the communities. Yet, while Care staff were trained by these officers, and in both projects funds were provided to enable the officers to travel to the islands, government officers lack the budget to visit island communities and provide sustained support. The festival, while an important alternative forum for knowledge sharing, is not a solution to the underlying structural barriers to information exchange and sustained support for experimentation on the islands. Similarly, while the festival provides opportunities for discussion between communities and provincial decision makers — and some advocacy, in particular by the emboldened chief — respondents reported underlying dissatisfaction with the existing relationship between the community and province. In particular, there were concerns about the capacity of formal institutions (elected Area Councils supported by delegated Area Secretaries) to undertake community initiatives (due to lack of funds), communicate their needs to the province, or report back on activities at the provincial level.

RESILIENCE AND TRANSFORMATION

Overall, there is evidence of positive steps towards support for adaptive capacity, both in addressing power relations and decision making, and in providing increased opportunities for experimentation and learning. In focusing these changes on actions to address climate change impacts, the interventions are helping to build resilience to climate change by marrying the ability to cope with impacts and the ability to make ongoing changes in response to future shocks and stresses. Yet despite a clear focus on adaptive capacity in the program via the resilience framework, for the most part the activities that supported adaptive capacity were fragmented, rather than forming the central purpose driving forward (and structuring) the work done on the islands. While the program has successfully introduced discussion of adaptive capacity and thereby helped shift the discourse of adaptation in Vanuatu, translating this into changes in practice is a slower process, and one that demands changes in both thinking and skills.

As noted above, it is both possible and desirable to increase equity and support adaptive capacity through attention to the process through which adaptation outcomes are achieved. Yet in the interventions — and in common with many other case studies of community-based adaptation (Ensor and Berger 2009) — the support for adaptive capacity emerged more as a consequence of a focus on adaptation outcomes, than through an explicit orientation of the work towards expanding access to forms of decision making and knowledge building for future adaptations. This is not to say that capacity building and empowerment work did not take place; rather, the observation is that such activities need to be linked to cycles of experimentation and learning that gradually build towards the resources and relationships that support adaptive capacity within communities. Such an approach requires that development attention is directed towards at least three interconnected areas (Ensor 2011; Ensor et al. 2014):

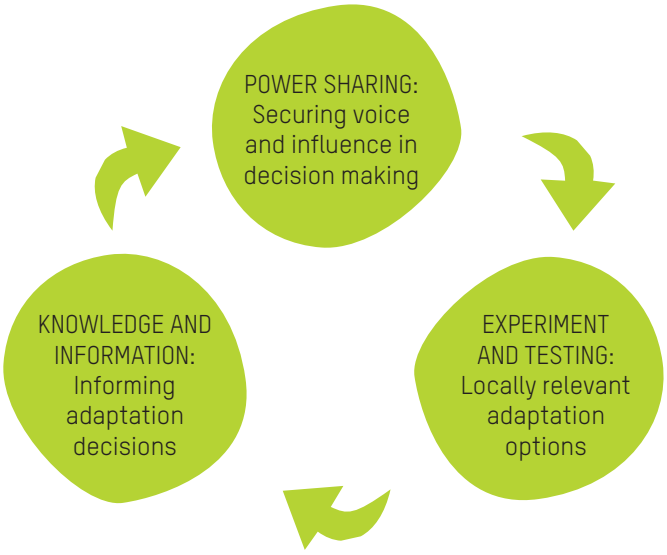
First: the power sharing arrangements that are in place to expand the voice and influence of marginalised individuals within communities, and marginalised communities, over decision making;

Second: the sources and processes that give rise to the knowledge and information that inform adaptation decisions; and,

Third: the availability of experimentation and testing of adaptation options that are relevant at the local level.

These three dimensions echo the resilience framework employed in the program, and provide an approach to structuring development support for adaptive capacity. Each requires particular forms of facilitation and support to build confidence, entitlements, skills, awareness and capacities among communities and external actors. As Figure 2 illustrates, the dimensions are linked and interdependent: the sources and processes that give rise to knowledge and information feed into power sharing relationships and emerge as collaborative actions — experiments and tests — that apply new understandings and produce learning. While it is clear that the challenges of shifting development thinking across several agencies go beyond the framework used, there is potential benefit to a simplified structure in which the interdependencies between the key components are clear.

Figure 2: an approach to supporting action on adaptive capacity (adapted from Ensor 2011).



Rather than displacing the current resilience framework, Figure 2 can be used to illustrate the potential for building virtuous cycles through project design that incorporates the three dimensions in sequence. In common with the resilience framework, attention is directed towards locally appropriate processes that can be supported and sustained to expand a community's power sharing, knowledge and information, and experimentation and testing opportunities — and thereby expand their capabilities in ways that enable them to engage with the challenges of complex environmental change. This approach recognises that adaptive capacity cannot be achieved as a result of a single development intervention, but instead that a community's ongoing processes of building and rebuilding relationships and networks can be supported in ways that help them to better meet the challenges of climate change. Yet, to do so inevitably also engages structural issues that shape opportunities and resources within and across scales, in particular, access to knowledge and information, the ability to engage in shared decision making on issues that impact on community-scale adaptation, and support that minimises risks and increases opportunities for experimentation and testing of adaptation alternatives at the local level.

1. STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Structural issues, many of which act across scales, emerged as a recurring theme in the conversations with interviewees in the three islands of Vanuatu. These issues are social, cultural and political factors that limit agency — placing fundamental constraints on the opportunities and decisions that individuals on the islands can make. While in some projects local structural issues — notably gender in decision making — have formed a focus, it remains the case that community projects generally do not attend to substantive, cross-scale issues, such as state support for adaptation and the allocation of resources across Vanuatu. To take on such issues requires a significant reorientation. As Dodman and Mitlin (2011:np) suggest, it means:

> "recognis[ing] that there is also a need to deal with institutionalised power relations above the level of the settlement, and [that] this requires community structures that enable local groups to work together to represent their interests within these political structures."

There is evidence from the projects that such steps can and are being taken in Vanuatu. The work of Save the Children in Vatrata has been explicitly focused around supporting an emerging youth movement across Vanuatu via the National Youth Symposia in 2013 and 2014. These events provide opportunities for learning and sharing of experiences among youth from different islands, and offer an opportunity for the representatives to present to government decision makers. Crucially, these events help empower the representatives, demonstrating how they can help secure change in their own community and have their views valued by decision makers that operate at the national level. The consortium and networking approach, championed by Oxfam and adopted by the different agencies, has been hugely successful in opening spaces for advocacy and NGO voices in national adaptation planning. As noted by Sterrett (2015):

"Through the Vanuatu Climate Action Network (VCAN) and the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN), as well as the Consortium Management Group (CMG), the program has increased understanding and practice of climate change related issues, in particular communicating about climate change at multiple levels through different mechanisms … It has been instrumental in influencing government policy."

The next step for this work is to consider how the NGOs can withdraw, to enable community members to represent their own views, via their own institutional structures. Further analysis of the governance context would be needed to establish whether this approach requires advocating for improved support for communities from, or more fundamental reform of, the existing formal governance structures. As Dodman and Mitlin (2011: np) note, "it is not sufficient that the citizen engagement is simply at the local level … agencies that are not accountable to local communities may misrepresent their interests at levels above the local, however well intentioned they may be."

Each of these examples offer positive signs for supporting social and political transformation towards more equitable relations within and between communities and islands. Yet there are a number of structural issues that have significance for adaptive capacity that were identified by respondents, which have not been central to the projects as they are currently framed. For example:

- Violence against women: a fundamental abuse of women's rights when it takes place at any scale, the extent of the problem as reported on Mota Lava suggests a normalisation of such violence (as one respondent reported: "it is known about, but not talked about") and a shocking degree of repression of women. Equitable social relations at the community level are impossible unless this context is addressed, rendering any efforts at participatory development illusory.
- The ship: as noted, the unreliability of the inter-island ship, and the dependence on it by the islanders, was raised on all islands as a fundamental constraint. Lack of reliable access to the ship undermines communities in several ways: reducing access to foodstuffs, materials and physical resources; reducing access to markets for saleable goods; and undermining investments in cash crops, which can be left to rot at the dockside.
- Provincial and government officers: these individuals are a source of important knowledge and resources for communities, and their advice is appreciated and relied on. For example, the forestry officer in Sola (responsible for Torba province) has established a nursery for trees that are suitable as cash crops and soil protection, and described how he had been able to persuade the communities he works with that, due to climate change, actions on coastal protection are more urgent than planting sandalwood (an important source of long-term financial security). However, low budgets and the high cost of transport mean that he is only able to support communities that are easily accessible on the main island (Vanua Lava) and, for example, is unable to reach Mota Lava (unless supported by an NGO).
- Tourism: to date, Futuna has not been open to tourists. However, respondents were aware that the island Council of Chiefs is working to revise this position. The consequences of this move are potentially enormous for those living on the island. Those best placed to take advantage — including those with resources and skills to invest in building bungalows or providing boats for transport around the island — could develop a significant new source of income. It was suggested that vegetables grown in the home gardens developed during the project would be valuable for tourists (vegetables are "food that white people like"), potentially undermining the nutritional support that these plots provide to families, and/or opening up new sources of income for women on the island. At present, the nature of the plans is unclear, including whether they address issues related to the distribution of costs and benefits, such as the number of tourists, where they might visit, how many bungalows can be built and under whose ownership. Less clear still — and ultimately unknowable — are the long-term consequences of these changes.

- Land law: recent changes to the land law are set to have a significant impact on the single most important resource in Vanuatu. As in many developing world contexts, land is fundamental both to livelihoods and multiple aspects of identity, and its significance is born out by the recurrence of land disputes in the lives of many of the respondents. The new land law is intended to increase protections for Kastom owners in customary land, notably recognising and empowering customary institutions to make determinations on rightful customary owners. How the new laws will play out at a local level remains unclear. On Mota Lava very few people had any knowledge of the change in the law, but one respondent suggested that it may provide communities with control over deep sea mineral exploration by extending custom ownership out to the deep sea — but in so doing potentially conflict with long standing communal access rights to the foreshore.
- Cattle: the village chief in Vatrata, Vanua Lava reported that he had recently attended a three-day workshop on livestock in the provincial capital. The course followed the recent opening of a provincial abattoir, and the chief reported that three people in the village were planning to keep livestock. Shipping livestock to the island is expensive, meaning only those with capital were able to take advantage. This is a potentially significant change in terms of land use change, environmental impacts and the ability of (a small section of) the community to accumulate assets. The provincial support for the plan appears to follow the mainstream logic of market based development — in which the capital accrued by those able to invest trickles down to the rest of the community. However, in many instances worldwide this has failed to deliver, either on its own terms or in terms of wellbeing (for example, see Kerr, 2012 on the social and environmental consequences of the 'green revolution').

These are examples of significant local, provincial or national issues that either are currently, or are in the process of, (re)shaping risk and opportunity on the islands. Each has implications for adaptive capacity — either directly, in the case of the government officers, or indirectly through local power relations and the capacity to influence adaptive actions.

The argument here is not that tourism, for example, will necessarily have negative consequences for the adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable on Futuna. Indeed, the opposite might well be the case. However, these are major issues that have the potential to reshape social relations and, in the process, the capacity to adapt. As such, the baseline assessments that underpin community-based adaptation must take account of these issues, and establish whether support for more equitable social, cultural or political change is a necessary part of action on adaptation. This shifts community-based adaptation away from its comfort zone — addressing climate change impacts and individual agency through capacity building — and towards linking agency and structure — through actions that work to support broad-based coalitions of support for change on issues of fundamental importance to the most vulnerable.

2. TRANSFORMATION THROUGH RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES

Rights-based development thinking provides one way to support this shift. Rights-based analysis looks to explore transparency, accountability, equality, participation and empowerment in different contexts, and in so doing exposes the mechanisms that underpin marginalisation and exclusion. Rights-based practice acts on this analysis, aiming to change the "balance of power within society and between state and society" in favour of the marginalised (McGee and Gaventa, 2011: 29). This approach recognises that entitlements (the goods and services that an individual can access) are secured or denied in a diversity of contexts, in which rules and norms are enforced by different (often overlapping) legal and administrative provisions, including through the power and authority of (for example) the state, the provincial authority, village chiefs and traditional or Kastom practices and norms. Rights-based strategies may then seek to have entitlements recognised through contestation in social and political processes (such as village level advocacy led by women's solidarity organisations), or through appeal to legal or administrative systems (such as negotiation with Kastom leaders or local government officials).

This offers different entry points for development actions, summarised as social (for example, the family or gender relations), political (Members of Parliament, island council of Chiefs, village development committees), administrative (provincial and state government officers), and legal (Land Law or the constitution). Rights-based actions can be mapped to each (illustrated in Table 2). As the summary in Table 2 suggests, each entry point has significance for adaptive capacity. Each encompasses norms and practices that shape behaviour, learning and knowledge, and influences access to and control over the information, resources and decision making that enable adaptive actions. As such, each plays a role in structuring opportunities to respond to, shape or create change at the community level. These four entry points provide a structure for applying a participatory approach to rights-based analysis, through discussions with community members and key informants about how the five principles — transparency, accountability, equality, participation and empowerment — play out in relation to social and political processes or through legal and administrative systems. By providing focal points for participatory dialogue this framing ensures the analysis links to development interventions, such as those illustrated in Table 2.

This is a view of adaptation that builds links between adaptive capacity and transformation, through political action that transforms social relations in ways that open opportunities to meet future climate uncertainty. Development actors that recognise the long-term and profound challenges of climate change need to ask themselves how they can best support these calls for change and secure, in the language of rights-based approaches, the ability to make sustainable claims against those with the responsibility to support adaptation.

Table 2: entry points for interventions in relation to adaptive capacity and illustrative examples of common rights-based development strategies (Ensor et al. 2015).

ENTRY POINT	DESCRIPTION	ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES	SIGNIFICANCE FOR ADAPTIVE CAPACITY	EXAMPLE OF RIGHTS-BASED STRATEGIES	
Social	Everyday interactions, encompassing a broad range of institutions, networks, organisations and actors.	Family, gender relations, church, Kastom practices	Social relations mediate access to material and non-material resources and services, and influence how people interact with each other and their environment.	Community empowerment	Context specific empowerment processes can challenge particular aspects of social relations within communities, for instance gender norms that discourage participation of women in decision making.
				Change from within	Human rights principles are articulated drawing on existing social and cultural norms and institutions, such as religion or traditional practices, which are used as the basis for change processes.
Political	Decision making in institutions and organisations and the associated role of networks and actors in exercising authority.	Members of Parliament, Island Councils, village development committees	Institutional and power relationships determine participation in and the processes and norms through which adaptation decisions are made and resources are secured.	Awareness raising	Building public knowledge in order to pressure for change, e.g. in existing laws and policies, to reinforce human rights norms, as well as responsibilities of duty bearers in different settings.
				Alliance building	Developing advocacy networks among communities, NGOs, social movements, associations and community-based organisations to build voice, reduce risk, monitor state action and secure a greater role for communities in decision making and agenda setting.
Administrative	Institutions and organisations of the state and related actors (including policy processes, mechanisms of delivery and oversight of public and private actors).	Provincial and state extension officers (e.g. forestry, fisheries)	State administrative functions have the potential to deliver, enable, regulate or restrict access to the resources and services necessary to support adaptation (both material, e.g. finance, and non-material, e.g. information services)	Capacity building	Capacity building among communities to claim rights, to advocate for policy changes or policy implementation. Capacity building of state actors to enable them to recognise and fulfil their duties.
				Relationship building	Building effective working relationships between rights holders in communities and state duty bearers. (While 'naming and shaming' of the state is the traditional mainstay of human rights advocacy, it is used less frequently as a rights-based development strategy.)
Legal	Legal institutions and organisations, justice mechanisms and actors.	National laws such as the land law, the constitution, legal support NGOs	Legal regimes regulate access to and control over natural resources, decision making (including opportunities for accountability and redress) and material and non-material resources for adaptation.	Litigation	Litigation may be pursued in anticipation of a successful court case, in particular to hold the state accountable in their duties to respect, protect and fulfil human rights obligations.
				Strategic use of law	The threat of litigation alone can be enough to secure political change. Alternatively, litigation may be pursued with the intention of bringing an issue or new information to public attention.

CONCLUSION: TEN LESSONS

The findings of this report can be summarised in terms of ten lessons for those engaged in the design or implementation of adaptations focused on poor or vulnerable communities:

1. A fundamental challenge is for NGOs, donors and government actors to move beyond a short-term view of addressing climate change impacts, and beyond seeing adaptation as a non-political, technological challenge.
2. Vulnerability is defined by multiple interconnected issues that have different significance in the lives of different community members, each of whom have their own perceptions of risk and access to opportunities.
3. Relationships defined by power and cultural norms shape how local risks are understood, prioritised and managed in adaptation decision making processes.
4. A focus on equitable decision making processes can shift relations of power and support the emergence of adaptive capacity that is the basis for future adaptive actions that benefit the whole community.
5. Building technical and decision making capacities and relationships with external actors who can bring information or support are central if communities are to continue to make informed adaptation decisions.
6. It takes a change in perspective and a significant investment of time if NGOs are to step back and restrict themselves to facilitating community access to information and knowledge as a precursor to informing their own processes of decision making.
7. Introducing discussion of adaptive capacity shifting the discourse of adaptation is a critical first step, but translating this into changes in practice is a slower process that demands changes in thinking and skills among NGO staff at all levels.
8. Structural issues normally remain in the background to projects, but cannot be avoided. For example, in Vanuatu equitable social relations at the community level are impossible unless endemic violence against women is addressed, rendering any efforts at participatory development illusory.
9. The baseline assessments that underpin community-based adaptation must take account of structural issues at multiple scales, and establish whether support for more equitable social, cultural or political change is a necessary part of action on adaptation.
10. Rights-based approaches offer strategies to address structural constraints on adaptive capacity, exploring the mechanisms that underpin marginalisation and exclusion and supporting the vulnerable to seek reform via social and political processes or through appeal to legal or administrative systems.

Futuna, Vanuatu: Mala Silas is a project officer with CARE, a consortium of six organisations working to help the people of vanuatu adapt to climate change. Mala helps communities in Futuna to build grow and store food during the hungry season. Photo: Simon Bradshaw/OxfamAUS.

Futuna, Vanuatu: A mobile phone mast brings coverage to around half of Futuna, bringing vital information like cyclone warnings and weather forecasts to the island. Photo: Simon Bradshaw/OxfamAUS.

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