

ADDRESSING LOSS AND DAMAGE THROUGH LOCALLY DRIVEN AND CULTURALLY GROUNDED APPROACHES



VANUATU

Case study | July 2026



INTRODUCTION

The Santiago Network connects developing countries and communities with tailored, context-specific technical assistance on loss and damage, enabling them to shape and lead action that reflects their priorities and realities.

Through a diverse global network of organizations, bodies, networks and experts (OBNEs), the Santiago Network delivers trusted and inclusive technical assistance, bridging needs and resources, unlocking access to finance, technology and capacity-building, and fostering peer learning and innovation.

The full operationalization of the Santiago Network was marked by the launch of technical assistance delivery in Vanuatu in May 2025 through the Nabanga Loss and Damage Consortium, which comprises four Santiago Network Members: Pacific Advisory Ltd (lead agency), the Institute for Study and Development Worldwide (IFSD), Sustineo and the Santo Sunset Environment Network (SSEN).

In collaboration with the Government of Vanuatu, the consortium has developed a comprehensive national programme to address loss and damage, which has benefited from strong country ownership.



Field engagement during a monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) mission in Vanuatu, led by the Santiago Network Regional Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific, June 2026.

CONTEXT

Communities across Vanuatu are experiencing the growing impacts of climate change. Rising sea levels and increasingly intense cyclones are damaging infrastructure, disrupting livelihoods and affecting ecosystems. These impacts extend beyond economic losses, threatening cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and ancestral lands that are central to community identity and well-being.

Recognizing the need for strengthened action to address these impacts, Vanuatu became the first country to receive technical assistance through the Santiago Network. This support aimed to advance the national loss and damage agenda and contribute to the following objectives:

- National loss and damage visioning;
- Assessment of loss and damage capacity development needs;
- Identification of methodologies and approaches for knowledge management and capacity-building;
- Preparation of the proposal to the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD).

The Santiago Network provided technical assistance to the Government of Vanuatu through the Nabanga Loss and Damage Consortium from May 2025 to June 2026. This support focused on the development of a long-term national programme to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change and the preparation and submission of a proposal to FRLD.

The Nabanga Consortium brought together extensive expertise and experience in climate change adaptation, loss and damage, community engagement and resource mobilization.



Mele Island, Port Vila, Efate, Vanuatu.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



Enhanced understanding of loss and damage

Through consultations with government institutions, non-governmental actors and community members, stakeholders were able to reflect on what loss and damage means in the Vanuatu context.



Evidence for loss and damage financing and programming

Data and insights collected through the community consultations, stakeholder interviews and literature review informed the key interventions for addressing loss and damage in the proposal for FRLD.



Community engagement in the loss and damage dialogue

Seven community consultations conducted using the Storian approach, capturing community perspectives on loss and damage.



Strengthened partnerships

Traditional and non-traditional stakeholders across the climate change and loss and damage agenda were engaged.



Cross-sector dialogue

Engagement strengthened with stakeholders across sectors on key loss and damage issues, including insurance, mental health and displacement.



Capacity building of local partners

Technical capacities of the Santo Sunset Environment Network and local facilitators strengthened, helping to retain knowledge and skills in the country.

LESSONS LEARNED



Early engagement and active involvement

Engaging the Santiago Network Secretariat from the outset could strengthen coordination, clarify roles and support trust-building among partners.



Dedicated government focal point and ownership

A designated government focal point, such as National Liaison Officer to the Santiago Network is essential to ensure ownership, coordination and clear decision-making processes.



Regular stakeholder check-ins

Regular calls between the Santiago Network Secretariat, the proponent and the implementing OBNE (s) help support coordination as priorities evolve and address issues at an early stage.



Proponent involvement in OBNE selection

Involving the proponent as an observer in the OBNE selection process could strengthen transparency, accountability and trust from the technical assistance outset.



Local partnerships and legitimacy

Partnering with local organizations helps strengthen legitimacy, local ownership, capacity-building and community engagement.



Monitoring and evaluation

Milestone-based reporting and monitoring strengthen accountability, compliance, financial controls and oversight.



Community visioning session with women's groups, Emua Village, Efate, Vanuatu, 2025.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

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Resources

Allocate adequate resources for coordination, project management, community engagement and communication as part of the technical assistance activities.



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Consortium approach

Encourage OBNE consortia and support local partnerships to facilitate knowledge transfer and strengthen long-term capacity.



03

Knowledge sharing

Explore opportunities for Vanuatu to share lessons learned and exchange experiences with other countries through webinars, events and peer-learning platforms.



04

Capacity assessment

Apply capacity assessment tools flexibly when working with small and community-based organizations, recognizing their unique structures and capacities.



05

Risk management review

Review the risk register template, as risks and issues often overlap and can create confusion among partners.



06

Reporting lines

Clarify roles, responsibilities and reporting lines among the proponent, the implementing OBNE and the Santiago Network Secretariat throughout the delivery of technical assistance.



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CONCLUSION

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Vanuatu's experience demonstrates the value of locally driven, culturally grounded approaches to addressing loss and damage. Through strong national ownership, inclusive community engagement and collaboration between local and international partners, the technical assistance provided through the Santiago Network has helped strengthen understanding, build capacity and lay the foundation for long-term action.

As climate impacts continue to intensify, the lessons and partnerships developed through this initiative provide a valuable model for advancing effective and equitable loss and damage responses. By placing communities, local knowledge and national priorities at the centre of decision-making, Vanuatu is helping to shape a more resilient future while offering insights that can inform similar efforts in other vulnerable countries seeking to navigate increasingly complex loss and damage challenges.



Community visioning session in Mere Sauwi, Nguna Island, Vanuatu, 2025.

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