



VRCS Activity Report: Uplift Bra Distribution

Background

Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) has had an ongoing relationship with Uplift Bras Australia for 8 years to provide access to quality new and second-hand bras for women in Vanuatu. VRCS has a wide network of branches and volunteers in communities across Vanuatu which allows for distribution to reach some of the more remote areas of Vanuatu where there is often no opportunity for women to access these kinds of basic necessities.

2018 Distribution

In April 2018, Vanuatu Red Cross received a new shipment of bras from Uplift Australia. Unfortunately, documentation has not been well kept on distributions however the following distributions have been recorded:

Area/Community	No. of cartons of bras distributed (approximate)
Vanuatu National Council of Women National Conference	10
Mele village, Efate	5
Young women's workshop	5
Tanna	5
Santo	5
Malekula	5
Vanualava	5
Ambae Evacuees (Santo)	10
Total cartons distributed	50 (approximately 2,500 bras)

*Note: some other distributions have also taken place but have not been recorded.

In accordance with the agreement with Uplift, VRCS also sells some of the bras to cover shipping and distribution costs. Bras are sold at heavily discounted prices which allows access to quality bras for women in the capital.

Highlights

Vanuatu National Council of Women Conference – 9th-18th May 2018

The Vanuatu National Council of Women (VNCW) held its 15th annual national conference in May 2018 which was attended by 100+ representatives from different islands across all six (6) provinces in Vanuatu.

The theme for the conference focused on strong female leadership with the aim to promote women to national government and parliament. Vanuatu is currently one of only 5 countries in the world with no female members of parliament. Vanuatu Red Cross was invited to attend the conference and took the opportunity to distribute over 1000 bras to the attending women. Some of these bras were taken back with the women visiting from other provinces to be distributed within their communities. The women were very appreciative of the bras, particularly those from rural areas who do not have access or means to purchase bras.

Distribution to Ambae volcano evacuees

In April 2018, the volcano on Ambae island in the north of Vanuatu became active again and caused large ashfall across much of the island. This ashfall made living conditions unbearable for many people

with food gardens being destroyed, water sources contaminated and houses collapsing under the weight of the ash. The Vanuatu government made the decision to evacuate the entire population and approximately 10,000 people were displaced. Vanuatu Red Cross mounted an emergency response and along with essential household items such as tarpaulins, kitchen sets and bedding, were able to distribute bras to the women who often were unable to bring any of their belongings. Cartons of bras were sent to Santo island, where most of the population had been evacuated to, and distributed by VRCS staff and volunteers in those areas. VRCS plans to send more bras to these areas in the coming weeks.



Helping mum to choose some underwear. Ambae evacuees receive bras and underwear in Santo.



A community in Santo receiving bras, approximately 40 women shared between themselves 2 cartons of bras.

Challenges

VRCS is committed to ensuring that the bras reach some of the most remote areas in Vanuatu however the logistics of distributing across an archipelago of 83 islands with poor transportation connections makes this a difficult task. Sending goods on ships is sometimes a risky method of transportation unless they can be accompanied. For this reason, VRCS utilises opportunities when staff are travelling to other islands for them to travel with some of the bras. This slows down the distribution process but is considered to be the safest method to distribute at the moment.

The agreement with Uplift which allows VRCS to sell some of the bras to cover distribution and shipping costs assists in addressing this challenge.

Another challenge VRCS has is that historically, the distribution of bras has been a very informal process and not well documented making it difficult to report back to the donor. VRCS plans to develop a simple template to record bra distributions in the future to improve information management and accountability.

Conclusion & Plan of Action

VRCS is proud to partner with Uplift Bras Australia to be able to assist the women of Vanuatu in accessing something that is often taken for granted in many parts of the world. Whilst the distribution process may be slow, the overall benefit to women is worth the wait. VRCS has approximately 200-250 cartons of bras remaining to be distributed. VRCS aims to increase distribution efforts and complete distribution before end-March 2019. A follow-up report will be issued once the distribution has been completed.