



ADRA Office attached to the Vanuatu Mission office.

Photo courtesy of Richard Greenwell.

ADRA Vanuatu

RICHARD GREENWELL

Richard Greenwell is currently (2020) the country director of ADRA Vanuatu, which he commenced September 2017. He lives in Vanuatu with his wife Leah, and two children. Richard has worked in finance roles within the church, for ACA Health Benefits Fund, SPD, Greater Sydney Conference, and North New South Wales Conference. Richard previously worked for ADRA Thailand and also served as CEO of Asian Aid, a supporting ministry of the Church.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) began in Vanuatu in February 2008 under the leadership of David Cram.¹ Cram, an Australian national, moved from ADRA Fiji to Vanuatu with the task to establish an ADRA office. Initially the office was in a room in a house located on the same compound as the Vanuatu Mission and Portoroki Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, which is located in Numbatu, Port Vila. During 2009 a new mission office and ADRA office was completed, and both entities moved into this new building in 2009.

The first board chair was John Leeman, and then Nos Terry took over this position when he returned to Vanuatu from Fiji as the Vanuatu Mission president in 2015.

ADRA Vanuatu started by working on the design of a Vanuatu Church Partnership Project (VCP) in 2008. This design was successful and AusAID, the international aid fund of the Australian government, funded a five-year project worth A\$868,328, working with communities across all provinces of Vanuatu. This project supported the various departments of the church in providing training and capacity building.

A second project, funded by the Czech Republic Development Cooperation through ADRA Czech, soon followed, and its focus was to provide teachers who had been working in community schools as informal teachers with a formal qualification. This training program was developed and implemented by retired teachers Peter and Glenda Roberts of Australia. This program, which was also supported by the education department of the South Pacific Division, went on to be funded through the VCP project and resulted in 150 teachers receiving their formal Certificate of Teaching Practice, which was provided under the auspices of Fulton College in Fiji.

Under the leadership of David Cram, ADRA Vanuatu developed expertise in WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), and this led to a series of water projects starting in 2009. These were funded by either NZAID Sustainable Development Fund, a New Zealand government international aid fund, or AusAID. ADRA Vanuatu expertise in the WASH sector grew quickly.²

In 2012 ADRA Vanuatu expanded the scope of its projects by commencing a food security project. This project worked across three islands of Vanuatu, and its purpose was to increase the production of food in local household gardens with an objective of increasing disaster and climate change resilience, health, and economic outcomes. This project was renewed in 2015 and again in 2018.

Cram completed his tenure at ADRA Vanuatu in December 2012 and returned to join ADRA Australia. In advertising for a country director to replace Cram, ADRA Vanuatu stated that “the role of the ADRA Vanuatu country director is to provide visionary and strategic leadership to ADRA Vanuatu so that it fulfills its mission as the humanitarian development and relief agency of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the area. The country director also ensures that ADRA’s administrative operation is professional and efficient, is financially accountable and sustainable, provides a positive and challenging work environment for personnel, and is an exemplary model of Seventh-day Adventist values.”³

Mark Le Roux, a South African-born Australian resident with an information technology and management background, was the second country director for ADRA Vanuatu and commenced employment in April 2013.⁴ During his time at ADRA Vanuatu, capacity was further developed in both the WASH and technology space.

ADRA Vanuatu continued to attract WASH funding and was considered one of the leading nongovernment organizations within Vanuatu in the WASH sector. In 2014 and then again in 2016 ADRA Vanuatu attracted large WASH funding from the New Zealand government and other agencies.⁵

In 2014 ADRA Vanuatu provided funding for the first complete health improvement program (CHIP) conducted in Vanuatu. CHIP is a community health initiative of Sanitarium Health Food Company and was organized in Port

Vila by the Health Ministries Department of the Vanuatu Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.⁶ ADRA also provided funding for taping a CHIP program and producing a set of DVDs for distribution.⁷

Vanuatu is one of the most natural disaster-prone countries in the world, and responded to Cyclone Vania in 2011 and then Cyclone Pam in 2015. Cyclone Pam was a Category 5 cyclone with winds of 155 miles per hour (250 kilometers per hour) and gusts of 230 miles per hour (370 kilometers per hour). ADRA Vanuatu was involved in supporting evacuation centers, distribution of water filters, food, shelter construction and hygiene awareness.⁸

In 2017 ADRA South Pacific resolved to establish a full-time emergency coordinator position in Vanuatu with funding from ADRA Australia. Joe Tjiobang started in this role in mid-2017 and has helped build on ADRA Vanuatu expertise in emergency preparedness and response.

In 2015 ADRA Australia through the support of some Memorial SDA Church members commenced funding of the Blossom project, which was focused on working with schools and churches to raise awareness for youth and families around sexual health. This project has grown over the years and is now seen as a leading light in family life education within Vanuatu.⁹ In September 2019 the Vanuatu government director of women's affairs appealed to ADRA Vanuatu to extend its Blossom family life training program across all denominations in Vanuatu.¹⁰

In early 2017 Mark Le Roux accepted an appointment with ADRA International, to take up the role of futurist for the ADRA network. Anna Dowling, an Australian who was in Vanuatu on a two-year placement as capacity development officer, acted as country director until September 2017, when a new country director arrived.

In September 2017 Richard Greenwell, an Australian, became the third country director of ADRA Vanuatu. His previous experience of three years as the CFO for ADRA Thailand and ten years as the CEO of Asian Aid equipped him well to fill the leading role for the agency. During this period ADRA Australia has continued to work in the WASH, food security, emergency and gender-based violence space. ADRA Vanuatu receives funding from the government of Vanuatu, ADRA Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), ADRA New Zealand, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and United Nations Women. ADRA Vanuatu also received considerable funding from SDA Church sources, such as the Sanitarium Health Food Company in Australia.¹¹

ADRA Vanuatu continues to be at the front of disaster response in Vanuatu. In September 2018 all residents of Ambae Island were evacuated as a response to a volcanic eruption on the Island.¹² ADRA Vanuatu was involved in a gender-based family violence response, and WASH responses in the following months.¹³

ADRA Vanuatu continues to work closely with the SDA Church in Vanuatu. A current pilot project funded by ADRA International is training youth within churches in emergency preparedness and response as well as teaching them how to manage their church as an evacuation center in the event of an emergency. This project is

carried out in partnership with the National Disaster Management Office of Vanuatu.

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NOTES

1. Unless otherwise credited, the information in this article is written from the personal knowledge and experience of the author, who is the country director for ADRA Vanuatu, based in Port Vila, Vanuatu.
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