Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Pam evolved and intensified into a Category 5 storm which hit Vanuatu including capital of Port Vila on the evening of 13 March, and is considered to be one of the worst natural disasters in the archipelago's history. It is estimated that many homes in the poor island nation of 264,700 people have been damaged or destroyed as many are built with natural and local materials that are vulnerable to strong winds and floods. With 13% of people already living below national basic poverty line\(^1\), and over 80% of the population depending on agriculture for their livelihood, it is expected that most plantations and local gardens will be destroyed, putting the population further at risk of malnutrition.

Schools, churches and community halls, many of which are being used as emergency shelters, as well as other Government-owned buildings have either been destroyed or suffered major structural damage. Lifeline facilities like hospitals, electrical utilities, water supply and telephone systems are compromised or destroyed.

Measles coverage is low and recent outbreaks give significant concern for the displaced, especially in shelter locations with a history of cases. These concerns have been shared with the NDMO and WHO/Health Cluster and UNICEF is assisting in coordinating a suitable Measles vaccination campaign following the cyclone.

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PACIFIC SITUATION REPORT
14 MARCH 2015

Pam has destroyed all mobile towers except one in Port Vila resulting in a complete lack of communication between Efate and both north and south provinces. There is therefore a complete absence of data on the impact of the cyclone on any part except Port Vila. Weather permitting, the Franz group will activate aerial assessments within the coming days, however the continuing presence of a cat 5 cyclone in the south is likely to delay this further.

Port Vila has 20 injuries reported and 6 fatalities confirmed.

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

The NDMO is coordinating the response with support from numerous agencies and bilateral arrangements. The EOC is functional with 24hr radio broadcasts (relayed throughout the country) and monitoring supported by the VHT members. 2 UNICEF staff have been assigned support roles within the EOC.

UNICEF is leading on WASH and supporting on Health. Nutrition is dealt with in Health and WHO has two nutritionists in-house. SCF have confirmed they will surge an Education cluster coordinator and Protection will be meeting on 15 March and discussing the need for Child Protection capacity and concerns of unaccompanied children and child/gender based violence. Cross-cutting issues are in need of emphasis.

Humanitarian Strategy

Pending information and initial assessment, planning remains theoretical and clusters within the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team are working to define suitable assumptions against which to articulate capacity, supply and financial needs.

Government priority

The Prime Minister has signed a declaration of state of emergency for SHEFA province (where the capital island is located), which will facilitate international assistance and flexibility of import regulations. NDMO are prioritizing logistics, roads and communications as a prerequisite to generating a clear picture of impact and needs. The Government underlines that lifesaving action needs to be timely, but that the scenario is still unfolding as southern islands are still under the path of the Cat 5 cyclone. The Government emphasized that data collection and IM are critical to structuring the response.

Summary Analysis of Programme response

The evacuation centres (substantially comprised of schools) are a high priority with efforts to standardize the support package. Numbers in centres can only be fully assessed at night or early morning before the community return to their residences to start recovering and securing materials. Given the damage (90%+), it is likely that the evacuation centres will see long term occupancy with resulting impact on education. The NDMO communicated that temporary schools are therefore a high priority.

It is expected that all early childhood centers, primary and secondary schools have been affected with damage to their infrastructure, loss of furniture and school supplies. This will affect the education of at least 70,000 school-aged children (early childhood to secondary) who will be at risk of discontinuing their schooling. Teachers’ houses are likely to have been damaged and support would also be required for the teachers especially in remote rural areas. Estimation of the full extent of the damage to the government and church schools including loss of supplies and materials will be determined after the assessment but could be in millions of dollars.

Urban search and rescue, paramedics, mobile hospitals and support to repair the morgue have been flagged for support. It is expected that most hospitals and clinics have been damaged exacerbating the already weak delivery of services to the population including maternal and child health services. With these new challenges, immunization and child nutrition will need to be prioritized in order to prevent further deterioration of children’s health or epidemics. It is expected that at least 50% of children under five (17,000 children) will be at risk of worsening childhood illnesses and nutritional status. Given the low levels of preparedness, and the impact of a disaster of this scale on the health system, along with disruption of other related services (i.e., unsafe water and sanitation, overcrowding, food insecurity, poor access to services etc.), it is anticipated that assistance to the health sector will have to be comprehensive covering human resources and medical and nutrition supplies with the concomitant introduction of new interventions. With UNICEF and WHO, the MoH and NDMO have recognized the importance of prioritizing measles vaccinations and preparedness action is underway. The EPI cold-room genset has been flooded. A UNICEF Staff member is working to repair the unit whilst searching for fuel to operate the cold store. Alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the cold chain are being investigated whilst repairs are effected.
Water supply has been restored in Port Vila. Safe drinking water and access to sanitation facilities may not be available in many places, increasing the risk of water-borne and vector-borne diseases. Vanuatu will require extensive support to meet immediate needs in water, sanitation and hygiene, including the provision of water containers, purification tablets, soap, and temporary sanitation facilities. With widespread destruction including in Port Vila, there will be considerable logistical challenges to reach communities in the provinces.

Protection
Notwithstanding the physical damage to infrastructure and agriculture, most children will be needing psychosocial support to deal with this trauma. With widespread infrastructure destruction there is a need to establish safe spaces for children, provide psychosocial support including counselling to both children and their caregivers who will be traumatized, and quickly establish procedures for identification and care for separated and orphaned children. Children and their families displaced and without adequate shelter are particularly vulnerable to protection risks. Vanuatu has high rates of violence against children and gender based violence, which will be exacerbated with stress of displacement and loss of livelihood. Loss of identify documentation is also an issue needing urgent attention. Identification and specialized services will be required for particularly vulnerable children, including children with disabilities and female headed households.

Communications for Development (C4D)
In the aftermath of such adverse events it is essential to support widespread multi-media and interpersonal campaigns to inform affected families on essential precautionary measures to protect their health and safety. Immediate needs include production and distribution of communication materials, including print and other media.

The NDMO (National Disaster Management Office) has a communication plan in place which includes:
- Radio: pre-recorded messages with VBTC National radio
- TV: advertisement for airing on National TV when functional
- 166 – Mobile phones: Emergency text messages with updated information is to be sent to all users (TVL and Digicel).

Supply and Logistics
Bauerfield International airport is currently inoperable. The runway remains waterlogged and the terminal is severely damaged. Fuel supply (Jet A1) is functional, but numerous aircraft have been destroyed on ground. The NDMO stated that the airport is closed to all commercial traffic until further notice, most likely to be a minimum of a week. The condition of airfields on other islands is unknown.

The UNICEF warehouse door was broken open by flying debris leaving it open to wind and rain ingress with associated waterlogging of carton-packed materials. MoH EPI colleagues have taken measures to secure against casual looting by groups of male youths. Repairs will be effected as soon as possible. The EPI cold-room genset has been flooded. A UNICEF SM is working to repair the unit whilst searching for fuel to operate the cold store. Alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the cold chain are being investigated whilst repairs are effected.

Minimum contingency stocks are held in Port Vila which will be used for immediate distribution. While emergency supply orders will be sent to supply division as soon as possible, available contingency supplies will be dispatched from stocks in Fiji, using all available air carriers. A boat is scheduled to depart Fiji on Tuesday, 17 March for Vanuatu, on which emergency education, health and WASH supplies will be dispatched.

Media and External Communication
The UNICEF Pacific Communications Specialist has been in heavy demand with telephone interviews from global news agencies, whilst also finding the time to upload regular news feeds to the internet. Communication support is being provided by colleagues in Fiji office and New Zealand office, particularly for interview requests and social media updates. UNICEF has agreed to provide NDMO with communications support on an ad hoc basis. An immediate needs document has been sent for distribution to all national committees.
TUVALU
A state of emergency has been declared in Tuvalu after tidal surges caused by Cyclone Pam. Funafuti has suffered damages, but the outer islands to the southwest where a large number of people have been severely affected. Houses, community halls and household gardens have been washed away. The Red Cross has begun its emergency response and started distributing emergency supplies to those affected. Damage Assessment team will leave on Monday and the team will conduct a rapid assessment of the needs and the situation. The team will be comprised of Health, Public Works, Red Cross, Home Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister.

As part of a coordinated response, UNICEF support has been requested for emergency supplies, medium-term health supplies to address issues of water-borne and mosquito-borne diseases and WASH-related issues.

SOLOMON ISLANDS
The tropical cyclone warning for Solomon Islands has been cancelled this morning, but the heavy raining warning continues covering all provinces of the country. Cyclone Nathan is currently located in the Coral Sea, possibly reaching the South of Solomon Islands by mid-next week.

The Initial Response and Assessment (IRA) Cluster met on 13 March to prepare for an assessment mission to the outer islands of Temotu province, including Anuta as well as Tekopia islands and an aerial assessment by Australia is expected to take place this weekend. An assessment team is currently in Honiara preparing for their mission to fly in to Lata once the airport is opened and to get on the boat to travel to the outer islands to assess the emergency situation.

SBD 3.5 million budget for response to Temotu province has been approved by the SI Government and an additional funds may be required depending on the results of the assessment, including the damages caused by Cyclone Pam in other provinces such as Malaita and Makira.

Although the information on the damage in Temotu Province is limited, the expected current needs for intervention include the following: Shelter, Wash, Food, Protection, Health, Education, Human Resources, Financial Resources, Logistics and other areas. In this connection, Clusters headed by relevant ministries with support from UN Agencies and development partners have been activated to coordinate emergency response to affected remote provinces and islands.

KIRIBATI
Although the weather has cleared up, TC Pam has still managed to cause damage in Kiribati, generating tidal waves as high as 4 meters. The Dai Nippon Causeway that links two of the most populated parts of Tarawa atoll, Betio and Bairiki, and was badly damaged by high seas on Wednesday. Reported flooding and damage to property due to storm surges were also experienced. No confirmed reports yet as to numbers affected and extent of damage suffered so far.

UNICEF Spokespersons

English: Alice Clements
Email: aclements@unicef.org
Mobile: +678 546 7132

French and English: Isabelle Austin
Email: iaustin@unicef.org
Mobile: +679 9925 613

For more information, please contact:

Karen B. Allen Isabelle Austin Alice Clements
Representative Deputy Representative Communications Specialist
UNICEF Pacific UNICEF Pacific UNICEF Pacific
Tel: +679 992 5427 Tel: +679 9925 613 Tel +679 925 606
kallen@unicef.org iaustin@unicef.org aclements@unicef.org