Highlights

- All the estimated 11,600 residents of Ambae Island (including some 5,220 children) have now been evacuated following a decision by the Government of Vanuatu Cabinet requiring mandatory evacuation in the light of the continuing eruption of the Monaro Volcano.

- Most displaced Ambae Island residents have relocated to evacuation centres or host families on the neighbouring islands of Santo, Maewo and Pentecost.

- UNICEF staff are supporting the Government of Vanuatu in coordinating and planning the immediate response to address education, WASH, health and nutrition, and child protection needs.

- An estimated 2,300 students will benefit from 15 tents (eight 72 sqm and seven 42 sqm in size) which were delivered to Santo Island on the request of the MOET to ease classroom shortages following the influx of the Ambae Island students.

- An estimated 1,670 children on Santo and Pentecost islands (435 households in Santo; 415 households in Pentecost) will be reached with WASH and dignity kits in response to requests from the Department of Water Resources and MOET.
The Government of Vanuatu (GOV) Cabinet ordered the mandatory evacuation of all 11,600 residents of Ambae Island (5,220 children) on 28 September following the declaration of a state of emergency amid the continuous eruption of the Monaro Volcano. A flotilla of private boats and commercial vessels as well as small planes ferried the residents to the neighbouring islands of Santo, Maewo and Pentecost. Of the 8,000 Ambae Island residents who relocated to Santo Island, 6,200 are being accommodated in 50 evacuation centres and the rest are with host families. Three evacuation centres on Maewo Island are accommodating about 1,900 evacuees and nine evacuation centres on Pentecost Island are hosting about 1,000 evacuees. Some 500 residents are believed to have self-evacuated to the capital city of Port Vila. Assessments of the evacuation centres are ongoing and preliminary results suggest a general lack of living space and inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities.

The GOV has identified four potential sites for temporary relocation in Luganville, the provincial capital of Sanma and the country’s second largest city. However, it is not yet clear whether the residents of Ambae will remain in evacuation centres or be transferred to these sites.

Food for evacuees was provided by the Government and host communities upon their arrival but it is unclear for how long food rations will continue. Evacuees from Ambae Island have experienced tremendous stress, many having been on the move for more than a week. The displaced population were only permitted to evacuate with personal belongings that they were able to carry. There is concern that there may be risks of an increase in incidents of gender-based violence. Reports were received of women having to share temporary accommodation with non-family members. As such it is likely there will be increasing protection needs which humanitarian actions will need to anticipate, work to prevent and respond to. Reports were received of some displaced families on Pentecost Island becoming separated in the initial phases of evacuation. This has been addressed through the establishment of a more methodical registration process in the evacuation centres.

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is currently establishing the location of the 2,669 primary students and 481 early child care and education (ECCE) learners from Ambae Island to ensure they are re-enrolled in schools near where their families have evacuated. The MOET has relocated 937 secondary students enrolled in a boarding school on Ambae Island to boarding schools...
on Santo Island; however, the MOET anticipates inadequate classroom and dormitory space to accommodate these students. At least four schools on Santo Island are being used as temporary evacuation centres and concerns exist about the availability of adequate WASH facilities in the boarding and primary schools that have absorbed students and families.

![Hazard Map](image)

**Figure 2:** The hazard map illustrates the risk to various areas on Ambae Island from Monaro Volcano, which is at Alert Level 4, the second highest level in the Vanuatu volcanic alert system. Flying rock and volcanic gas pose a risk in the red zone. Villages in the grey and orange zones also face unusual volcanic hazards while ash falls and acid rain would be expected around the Island in the dotted area, especially in villages exposed to prevailing trade winds.

Source: Government of Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office

**Humanitarian leadership & coordination**

The GOV is leading the humanitarian response through the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). The Government has activated most national clusters, including those for WASH, Nutrition, Education, Protection and Shelter, which UNICEF either co-leads or is an active member of. Some of these clusters have been replicated and made operational at the provincial level. National clusters have focused on ensuring that the right resources are available at the right time. Distribution and implementation have been the responsibilities of Provincial Councils and clusters. Coordination of the emergency response is slowly shifting to Luganville through the Sanma Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (POEC). However, Sanma PEOC has focused primarily on evacuees on Santo Island with scant information available from IDPs on the islands of Pentecost and Maewo.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations are supporting national coordinating structures and affected communities. The Vanuatu Ports and Harbour Authority is coordinating maritime movements with support from an NDMO logistics officer and the Maritime Wing of the Vanuatu Police Force (VPF).

**Assessment**

Assessment of the situation and needs of evacuees from Ambae Island, including their access to social services is ongoing. Preliminary results of a quick survey of some evacuation centres suggests that the primary concern is WASH facilities. A lack of space to accommodate the evacuees also has been acknowledged and the NDMO expects a “severe shelter shortage” for evacuees in Luganville.
UNICEF’s response

**Education**

- UNICEF is supporting MOET and Save the Children in coordinating and planning the response to educational needs.
- An estimated 2,300 students will benefit from 15 tents (eight 72 sqm and seven 42 sqm in size) which were delivered to Santo Island on the request of the MOET to ease classroom shortages following the influx of the Ambae Island students.
- An estimated 400 children will benefit from 10 early childhood development kits which were provided to MOET to support ECCE centres that will absorb Ambae Island learners.
- UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the MOET in the delivery of WASH-related support for schools that are hosting evacuated children.
- UNICEF is also providing technical assistance to the provincial education authorities in Luganville in reviewing and assessing the needs of schools that host evacuated children.
- UNICEF is ready to assist in the roll-out of a psychosocial support package to all host schools on the islands of Santo, Maewo and Pentecost.

**Health and Nutrition**

- Support from UNICEF to the Ministry of Health’s emergency response has included organizing geographic teams to address the health and nutritional needs of evacuees and preparing vaccines that may be needed. Some vaccine stocks were relocated from Ambae Island to Maewo Island to safeguard the supply and for prepositioning purposes.
- UNICEF are supporting provincial health teams to monitor and assess the situation of children and women in the evacuation centers.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**

- An estimated 1,670 children on Santo and Pentecost islands (435 households in Santo; 415 households in Pentecost) will be reached with WASH and dignity kits in response to requests from the Department of Water Resources and MOET.
- Households on Santo Island will benefit from 1,920 bars of soap in order to help reduce the risk of disease in evacuation centres.
- An estimated 7,902 children will benefit from 3,951 collapsible water containers (10 liters).
- An estimated 4,800 people will benefit from 96 squatting plates in Penama province. Additionally, tarpaulins (4x5m) have been provided which will be used as walls and roofs for toilet facilities.
- UNICEF, as co-lead of the WASH cluster, is supporting the coordination of the WASH response. Technical assistance is being provided to the MOET and UNICEF is participating in an NDMO-led assessment team which will select and prioritize long-term relocation sites.
- UNICEF is exploring the use of cash transfer to beneficiaries as part of the WASH response based on an expression of interest from the Government.
Child Protection

- UNICEF supported a half-day orientation on gender, disability and child protection to 35 peer educators at the Ministry of Youth, Sports Development and Training who will be deployed to support the evacuees. These youth peer educators previously were trained to provide psychosocial support in schools and communities during Tropical Cyclone (TC) Pam that struck Vanuatu in 2015.
- A psychosocial package developed by UNICEF after TC Pam is to be used to support displaced children.
- UNICEF has initiated discussions with the Vanuatu Civil Registry Office on tracking and tracing evacuees and possibly reissuing lost birth certificates.

Communication for Development

- UNICEF is working to provide technical assistance to the NDMO with regards to a community feedback mechanism. The deployment/secondment of a Communicating with Communities officer is being explored, following a request by the NDMO director general.
- UNICEF is engaging with clusters and partners in the coordination and planning of integrated communications for development messaging and multimedia information, education and communications materials and products such as brochures, posters, radio spots based on the key priorities of and issues affecting the displaced communities, especially children.

Funding

UNICEF is currently reprogramming up to $100,000 from regular resources to support the immediate response to this emergency. A UNICEF response plan is being finalized which will require additional resources, particularly for WASH and Education needs.

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