Highlights

- The Cabinet of the Government of Vanuatu (commonly known as the Council of Ministers) extended by two weeks the State of Emergency for the Monaro volcanic eruption. The Cabinet also instructed the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) to prepare a repatriation plan by 19 October for Ambae Island residents.

- Close to 8,000 residents of Ambae Island (including about 3,600 children) evacuated to Santo Island, including more than 5,000 who are being hosted in 51 evacuation centres (ECs) and more than 3,000 who are living with host families in and around Luganville. On Pentecost Island, more than 1,600 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were registered in 20 ECs and almost 700 IDPs were registered in 15 ECs on Maewo Island.

- 97% of registered IDPs in ECs on Santo Island have received water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and dignity kits. Water taps have been installed in 84% of the locations targeted by the WASH cluster, although only 27% of the target set for toilets have so far been constructed.

- UNICEF is assisting the clusters on WASH, Education, Health and Nutrition and Gender and Protection in developing their respective assessment reports and providing inputs into the repatriation plan for Ambae Island.
Residents of Ambae Island were evacuated to three neighbouring islands: Santo to the west and Pentecost and Maewo to the east. Pentecost and Maewo Islands are in Penama Province; Santo Island is in Sanma Province. About 300 residents also fled to the capital city, Port Vila, in the south.

More than 8,000 Ambae Island residents, or 71 per cent of the evacuated population, are in Luganville on Santo island, which is the second largest city in Vanuatu. More than 5,000 (63 per cent) of Ambae Island residents are living in 51 ECs and around 3,100 are living with host families. Of those living in ECs, 51 per cent (around 2,600) are children under the age of 18. On Pentecost Island, more than 1,600 IDPs had been registered in 20 ECs while 680 were registered in 15 ECs on Maewo Island. The IDPs and ECs in these two islands are dispersed along very large areas and are being hosted by communities.

The ECs are located in public parks, stadiums, churches, community halls and schools. At least eight schools on Santo Island are being used as ECs, impacting schooling for Luganville students. The conditions in the ECs have improved, particularly in the larger camps where family tents have been set up and water points and latrines have been installed. Overcrowding and lack of facilities are among the challenges reported in the smaller ECs, particularly on Santo Island. There is a need for portable chemical toilets in five primary schools and two secondary schools on Santo Island and pit latrines in one school on Pentecost Island, and another on Maewo Island, both of which absorbed a substantial number of students from Ambae Island.

At least 83 per cent (779 out of 937) of secondary students in boarding schools on Ambae Island were transferred to schools on Santo, Pentecost, Maewo and Efate islands. The number of unaccounted students remains high and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has acknowledged difficulties in collecting data on displaced students and teachers. Of children previously enrolled in education on Ambae Island some 59 per cent (1,335 children) of the 2,269 total primary school students and 75 per cent (361 children) of the 481 total early childhood education learners are not currently enrolled in education. Additionally, all the 47 students previously enrolled in rural secondary level technical educational facilities on Ambae Island are not currently enrolled in education.

Students from Maewo and Pentecost Islands, who had been attending boarding school on Ambae Island at the time of the evacuation, were relocated to Santo Island rather than returning to their
home islands. Reports have been received of several students, particularly those in boarding schools, becoming separated from their families. In one such report, a student was transferred to a boarding school on Santo Island but his family was evacuated to Pentecost Island. On Pentecost Island, some anglophone students from Ambae Island were not able to attend school because they were evacuated to francophone communities. In the light of the Cabinet’s decision, the MOET has also issued the following directives:

1. Secondary students in boarding schools shall remain in their host schools until the end of academic year on 17 November and all Year 8 students shall take their end-of-year exams;
2. Primary and early childhood care and education (ECCE) students will move together with their parents and teachers during repatriation;
3. Upon repatriation, all schools on Ambae Island shall continue for two additional weeks beyond the closing of the academic year on 17 November 2017;
4. Host schools will be provided school grants based on the number of students they have absorbed.

As a result of their evacuation some Ambae Island residents have experienced a great deal of uncertainty and stress. A preliminary assessment by the Gender and Protection Cluster indicated that some evacuees were feeling sad, hopeless and anxious about their homes and their displacement. However, other evacuees are reported to be demonstrating great resilience.

Humanitarian leadership & coordination

The GoV is leading the humanitarian response through the NDMO. The Government has activated most national clusters, including those for WASH, Nutrition, Education, Protection, Food Security and Shelter, of which UNICEF either co-leads or is an active member. 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 are the responsibilities of Provincial Councils and subnational clusters. Operational coordination of the emergency response is led by the Sanma POEC, which serves as the drop point and distribution hub for all relief supplies for the emergency.

Non-govermental 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.

UNICEF supported the UN Resident Coordinator in arranging a joint mission to Maewo Island and Luganville with the Prime Minister, Minister of Climate Change and senior GoV staff from other Ministries. While rain prevented the mission from landing on Maewo Island, the mission managed to visit the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) and three large ECs in Luganville, where the Prime Minister explained the Cabinet’s decision to extend the State of Emergency, thanked Ambae Island residents for their patience and compliance, the Sanma Provincial Government for their decisive action and invited comments and feedback from the community. Several issues were raised during the meeting, including requests for unambiguous communication on return arrangements and Government support for returning communities, including assistance to resolve difficulties related to free roaming livestock, access to water and additional support for Ambae Island children to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by their disruption to schooling and are provided with psychosocial support.
A team led by the NDMO with representatives from the Food Security and WASH clusters and a UNICEF WASH specialist carried out a quick environmental assessment on Ambae Island. Their findings included the following:

- Storage capacity on West Ambae, which is dependent on rain water, is at approximately half storage capacity because of seasonal dry weather.
- Readings for acidity and alkalinity from six water samples were found to be normal – ranging from of pH 7 to pH 8.6 (neutral to moderate alkalinity) with normal conductivity.
- Volcanic ash deposits were noticeable on water tanks coverings, roofs and trees.

The Gender and Protection Cluster conducted a survey among IDPs in one EC that indicated the practice of open defecation; difficulty in menstrual hygiene management because of lack of sanitary products; separation of children in boarding schools from their parents; and, general sadness and anxiety.

**UNICEF’s response**

**Education**

- UNICEF is supporting MOET and Save the Children, both at national and subnational levels, in coordinating and planning the response to educational needs in ECs as well in the return to Ambae Island and establishment of a monitoring system.
- Twelve of 15 tents provided by UNICEF have been set up to supplement classroom space in schools that have absorbed students and ECCE learners from Ambae Island and are serving as temporary learning spaces for primary school students and ECCE learners. Three remaining tents were in the process of being set up, as of the end of the reporting period. An estimated 2,300 students will benefit from these 15 tents (eight 72 sqm and seven 42 sqm in size).
- UNICEF is also releasing to the MOET 66 early childhood development (ECD) kits and 38 school-in-a-box kits. The ECD kits are to be used by teachers in ECs to conduct activities for primary and ECCE learners. The 66 ECD kits can benefit as many as 2,640 young children. The 38 school-in-a-box kits will be distributed to secondary schools that have absorbed students from Ambae Island. They can support as many as 1,520 students.
- UNICEF is providing the MOET and school officials with technical assistance in the assessment and delivery of the education and WASH response to schools hosting Ambae Island students.
- UNICEF helped the MOET prepare a psychosocial response plan and is committed to its implementation. Some 100 teachers and school officials will be mobilized to provide psychosocial support to more than 800 secondary school students of Ambae Island currently transferred to boarding schools on the Islands of Santo, Pentecost, Maewo and Efate.

**Health and Nutrition**

- The Ministry of Health (MOH) has organized a fixed emergency medical team at the Northern Provincial Hospital (NPH) in Luganville as well as mobile emergency medical teams that
provide medical services, including immunization, maternal and child health, management of acute malnutrition and disease surveillance.

- UNICEF is supporting the deployment of these medical teams, including by providing medical supplies. The following nutrition items had been delivered to the NPH as of the end of the reporting period:
  - 1 pack of F-75 therapeutic diet, sachet, 102.5g/CAR-120 sufficient for 10 children.
  - 2 packs of F-100 therapeutic diet, sachet, 114g/CAR-90, sufficient for 90 children.
  - 2 packs of therapeutic spread, sachet 92g/CAR-150, sufficient for 6 children.
  - 1 pack of mid-upper arm circumference tape used for measuring children 11.5 Red/PAC-50.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the Department of Water Resources (DOWR) and the WASH cluster in the development of a repatriation plan.
- WASH kits have reached 97 per cent of the more than 5,000 IDPs in ECs on Santo Island. These include 463 of the 825 WASH immediate response and dignity kits that UNICEF has provided to the DOWR. However, only four per cent of the more than 3,000 IDPs living with host families have been reached with these supplies. As such the remaining 362 WASH kits are being prioritised for IDPs living with host families. On the Islands of Pentecost and Maewo, distribution of hygiene kits, with support of the Vanuatu Red Cross Society, is nearly complete to all 2,280 displaced people.
- The WASH cluster installed nine of 14 water tanks (each with capacity to carry 6,000 litres) in the large ECs. UNICEF provided eight of these water tanks. Water trucking is being done in 13 ECs, benefiting some 1,882 evacuees. In addition, 28 of 34 water taps (84 per cent) had been fitted in evacuation sites as of the end of the reporting period.
- 30 pit toilets have been installed in ECs on Santo Island, with an additional 25 and 10 being installed on Pentecost and Maewo, respectively. UNICEF provided 96 squatting plates for these latrines but they had not been installed as of the end of the reporting period.

Child Protection

- A 7 metre boat donated by UNICEF to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) was sent to Pentecost Island to support teams from the MOIA, the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development (MOYSD) and the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MOJCS) who are carrying out birth registration and psychosocial support activities on the Islands of Pentecost and Maewo.
- UNICEF released 17 recreation kits and 10 pieces of tarpaulin to assist peer support group volunteers carry out psychosocial activities in the ECs.
- UNICEF supported the MOYSD and the MoJCS in developing a response plan to include protection measures during repatriation.

Communication for Development

- UNICEF is supporting the Health Promotion Unit of the MOH in developing integrated health messages on handwashing, nutrition, measles and psychosocial support as well as in the
dissemination of these messages via radio and SMS campaigns targeting Santo, Maewo and Pentecost Islands.

- UNICEF collaborated with WASH partners to celebrate Global Handwashing Day in Port Vila, Santo, Maewo and Pentecost during community awareness and outreach activities in primary schools and child-friendly spaces that promoted health and hygiene.

- UNICEF staff supported health workers in conducting awareness and social mobilization activities in ECs and communities.

- 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 to develop 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 displaced communities, especially children.

Funding
UNICEF can reprogramme up to $100,000 from its regular resources to support the immediate response to this emergency. Additional resources are needed to support UNICEF’s response plan, which includes support to displaced communities on their return to Ambae Island.

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Sounds of laughter at Sulua Centre School as children enjoy a game of a favourite sport, football! UNICEF Pacific2017/ Olul