Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

After weeks of minor eruptions that blanketed parts of Ambae Island with ash, the Manaro volcanic activity has decreased with reduced ashfall experienced over the last two weeks. The ash has, however, increased the risk of landslides, two of which were triggered by heavy rain and destroyed all houses in the two communities. Residents in the most ash-affected communities have been evacuated to designated safe zones. Some 112 families (469 persons) from southern Ambae have sought refuge in 10 host communities in the east, whilst 757 families (3,055 persons) from the northern communities are temporarily sheltering in Saint Patrick’s College and Torgil Training Center in the northeast. An undetermined number have voluntarily relocated to Santo, Efate and other nearby islands.

Of the evacuees in the Northeast, 140 are children under five, four are persons with disabilities and three require special medical attention. Nine hundred students from the north and south were relocated together with their 50 teachers. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) assessment team noted limited access to sanitation facilities in evacuation centres, with 50 people sharing one toilet. To date, there have been no diarrhoea or disease outbreaks recorded by health colleagues, and two major health facilities are still operating on Ambae; mobile emergency health teams continue to support displaced people and those in high risk locations.

1 Vanuatu WASH Cluster Situation Report #2 on Volcanic Ash Fall in Ambae, Penama, 24 April 2018
Access to safe water on the island has been difficult, even prior to the recent ash fall. The western part of Ambae traditionally faces an intense dry season between July and November, with little potable groundwater and no surface water. In several locations there is a heavy reliance on rainwater harvesting, a practice compromised by the ash, which has settled on the roofs and guttering used to collect rainwater. Recent water quality testing in four of 11 samples (36%) in the island indicate notably high (> 1.5 mg/L) fluoride concentrations, which exceeds recommendations for children over a long period. However, given the geology of Vanuatu’s islands, this is common in groundwater supplies and is largely unrelated to the current volcanic activity. Twenty-two of 45 recent samples (49%) have also shown one or more elements of aluminium, iron, manganese and zinc at elevated concentrations. Although not considered a significant health risk, these elements discolour and change the taste of water. The unaffected water source is ground water, which is accessed through two boreholes, one in the south-east and the other in the north-west of the island. Daily water trucking is being done from these two sources to the affected communities, however, road conditions and the distances involved are limiting the deliveries.

| Estimated Population in Need of Humanitarian Assistance (Source: 2016 census figures) |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Start of humanitarian response: | Total | Male | Female |
| Total Population in Need        | 11,600| 5,893 | 5,707  |
| Children (Under 18)             | 5,220 | 2,652 | 2,568  |
| Children Under Five             | 1,659 | 843  | 816    |
| Children 6 to 23 months         | 522   | 265  | 257    |
| Pregnant and lactating women    | 360   |       | 360    |
| Secondary school students       | 937   | 476  | 461    |
| Primary school students         | 2,669 | 1,356 | 1,313  |
| ECCE learners                   | 481   | 244  | 237    |

**Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination**

The Government of Vanuatu has declared the entire island of Ambae to be a disaster zone and imposed a state of emergency from 13 April - 13 July 2018 to allow for a phased relocation of all Ambae residents to safe areas. It has adopted a three-phased approach to address the emergency: the short-term emergency phase (April-June); the intermediate term (July-December) and the long term (2019-2020). The NDMO is tasked to manage the short-term emergency phase and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will assume leadership of the intermediate to long term phases. The NDMO is working with respective government-led clusters to coordinate both on ground response and planning. UNICEF is supporting the clusters for WASH, Education, Gender and Protection, and Health and Nutrition.

By 15 May, the currently ongoing registration of all Ambae residents by the Civil Registry and Vital Statistics Office should be completed. This date also serves as a target for relocation of all secondary school students to alternative boarding schools, which will be in Santo, Maewo and Pentecost. All on-island evacuation of communities at significant risk will be completed by mid-May. The Government has decided to avoid use of off-island evacuation centres, opting for direct permanent resettlement.

Four permanent relocation sites were identified in the nearby island of Maewo with a total land area of 1,124 hectares. These are Sanason in the south of Maewo, Ulu and Naruru in the central part and Loloruku in the north. Nineteen communities of Maewo have agreed to host 3,000 Ambae evacuees as they relocate to these new settlement sites. A multi-sector team recently travelled to these locations to assess the steps and investment required to prepare. A team from the Department of Land is also in Maewo to survey the land in the relocation sites for use in development planning.

The movement to transfer Ambae residents to Maewo is slated to start on 25 May and should be completed by 15 July, although some discussion is ongoing between national and provincial authorities as to the destination preferences of Ambaens, and possibilities for remaining in Ambae’s safe zones. On 8 May, a provincial team conducted an assessment.
of host community capacity on Maewo. It is proposed that the seat of the Penama Provincial Government, which is currently in Ambae, will be transferred to Maewo starting on 30 May.

The Government has established a logistics hub in Luganville in Santo Island, west of Ambae. The NDMO and the Maritime Regulator has requested all ships passing Ambae stop to offer passage to residents who may wish to leave the island voluntarily.

On 7 May, the Government presented to the Heads of Missions in Vanuatu the scope, scale, level of response received for both TC Hola and Ambae volcanic eruption response. They also disclosed a total budget deficit of US$93 million for Ambae, and US$5 million for the TC Hola Response. For Ambae, the deficit is broken down into US$6 million for the immediate phase, US$14 million for the intermediate and US$73 million for the long term.

The PMO convened a Donor Roundtable Meeting on 9 May to formalise its request for assistance to fund the shortfalls. The Government is working to establish a dedicated task force to oversee the relocation exercise. Membership of this task force will include the Director Generals from the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Climate Change (NDMO), the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is expected that the Ministry of Finance will also be included. Some fresh emergency funding was committed during the meeting, including from the European Union and France, with many other partners communicating a willingness to reprogramme existing funding commitments and or seek Ambae specific resources. The collective request of partners was for clearer definition and greater detail on priorities, with the suggestion that those rendered homeless on Ambae be the focus of initial funding requests.

Humanitarian Strategy

The Government’s intention is to facilitate relocation of the entire population of Ambae to land identified on nearby islands. This is to be undertaken in consultation with the provincial government. At this stage, there remains uncertainty over the status of and services provided to any Ambaens who opt to stay on Ambae.

UNICEF’s strategy will be aligned with government’s priorities and will cover two areas of response: the communities remaining in Ambae, and the permanent relocation sites. All programme sections are supporting respective ministry counterparts in the development and adjustment of sectoral response plans, including supply requirements.

UNICEF’s commitments to Ambae, both for the returnees from the last evacuation, and those activities planned within the Penama provincial authorities, will be revisited and adjusted in consultation with donors, national and local government partners. For example, planned upgrading of rainwater catchments in Ambae primary and secondary schools may be re-directed to off-island schools accepting Ambae students. Support to resettlement sites will, following initial fast-track activities, be absorbed with the existing long term commitments to the province.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Education

- UNICEF, in conjunction with Save the Children, has been supporting the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and the Provincial Education Office (PEO) in coordination and planning of the response. UNICEF is conducting a visit to Santo and Pentecost islands to visit secondary schools accommodating Ambae students and teachers which will look at the overall needs of each school and their infrastructure requirements, particularly in WASH. Support will also be provided in the re-assignment of UNICEF tents that were used during the Ambae evacuation last year.
- School in a box and recreation kits provided to the PEO during the repatriation of 2017 evacuees were distributed in mid-March, prior to the declaration of current state of emergency.
- 14 additional recreation kits that can benefit at least 1,260 children are being shipped to Ambae to support psychosocial activities in schools and temporary learning spaces. UNICEF is working with NDMO on logistics to move additional requested education supplies (including tents and further kits) from warehouses in Port Vila, Vanuatu and Suva, Fiji.
**Child Protection**

- UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYSD) in organising protection teams that will be deployed in the evacuation centres, transition communities and permanent relocation sites to initiate psychosocial activities (PSS) for children, establish/re-establish protection referral systems and providing help and attention to vulnerable groups before, during and after the mass relocation. The MoYSD are coordinating closely with the MoET over PSS activities within schools on Ambae and plans for the same in relocation sites.
- During the 2017 evacuation, UNICEF provided materials to the Civil Registry needed for issuing identity cards (ID). These are in use by the Civil Registry Office on Ambae, where efforts are being made to complete provision of IDs to all residents.

**Health & Nutrition**

- With support of UNICEF, the EPI unit of the MoH is reviewing vaccine coverage rates and implications of a mass movement of Ambae residents to other islands. Action will be taken to reduce risks of vaccine preventable disease, and relocate associated infrastructure to the resettlement sites.
- The Health Emergency Operations Centre, located in the east of Ambae, continues to provide support to displaced and high risk communities. Within this outreach programme, key hygiene and sanitation messages have been disseminated and attention given to monitoring of WASH related health concerns. These teams have supported distribution of hygiene kits supplied by UNICEF through the Department of Water Resources (DoWR).

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

- UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the provincial government in the coordination of humanitarian assistance to displaced people and in the preparation for the mass relocation from Ambae Islands. UNICEF staff have assisted the Chairman of the provincial disaster committee to establish an emergency operation centre in West Ambae.
- UNICEF staff in Ambae have assisted the distribution of 955 WASH and dignity kits and in supporting daily water distribution from the only potable groundwater source.
- Construction of first flush rainwater systems, intended to minimise the impact of ash on collection surfaces, has been suspended as six of the eight selected communities in western Ambae have evacuated to a safe zone and are awaiting off-island relocation. Re-direction of the project will be discussed with the DoWR.
- Hygiene supplies, including bars of soap to benefit 1,400 people, are in the process of being distributed to Ambae covering evacuation sites and affected areas in the north of the island.

**Communications for Development (C4D)**

- UNICEF completed a three day C4D training in Port Vila for Government partners and other stakeholders prior to the declaration of the emergency. Following the declaration, C4D support was provided to each cluster. Working closely together with the NDMO and clusters, UNICEF has sought to harmonise and promote consistent messaging across all stakeholders in the response.

**Media and External Communication**

- UNICEF’s support to clusters and Government response is being used in visibility materials, and on social media so far, we have reached: Facebook - 33,577 (total of 8 posts); Twitter - 25,635 (total of 23 tweets) with the hashtag #StrongerThanManaro having been used by 58,960 people. The total number of people engaged through social media, since the most recent volcanic activity began, is 118,172. Furthermore, the content sourced during the first week of the assessment continues to be highlighted across digital platforms.
Security
On 13 April, a Joint Police Force was enacted and deployed during the three-month state of emergency, and will be providing security and assistance during the relocation of the Ambae Island residents. The main threats posed to residents and actors on the island relate to natural hazards including flooding, landslides, ash inhalation and ash fall.

Funding
On 7 May, the government announced a total budget deficit of US$93 million for Ambae response and US$5 million for the TC Hola Response. For Ambae, the deficit is broken down into US$6 million for the immediate phase, US$14 million for the intermediate and US$73 million for the long term. In support of the Government, UNICEF is currently reviewing its response and funding requirements.

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