Humanitarian Situation Report #4

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Manaro Voui Volcano on Ambae Island in Vanuatu has been erupting since September 2017, but volcanic activity recently escalated, with the volcano spewing thick volcanic ash that blanketed almost the entire island. On 25 July 2018, the ash was so thick that it completely blocked the midday sun, and ash fall was recorded on the neighbouring islands of Maewo and Pentecost.

With the increase in volcanic activity, the Vanuatu Metereology and Geohazard Department (VMGD) increased the volcano alert level from 2 to 3, indicating minor eruption, and expanded the danger zone to 3 kilometres around volcanic vents and areas inside a yellow zone. The risk of Ambae Island volcanic activity escalating to level 4 or moderate eruption is considered moderate to low, but the VMGD has warned of the possibility of flank eruptions and/or lateral volcanic blasts. The increased volcanic alert level led the Vanuatu Council of Ministers (COM) to reinstate a state of emergency for Ambae Island for two months, from 26 July–26 September 2018; it had previously expired on 13 July 2018.

The COM also called for the immediate and compulsory evacuation of all Ambae Island residents to Maewo Island. Evacuations under the previous Government directive had been voluntary, however the COM has now instructed that all investment on Ambae Island cease immediately and that all emergency funding focus on evacuation and resettlement to Maewo Island. The Government is invoking force majeure as a justification for its suspension of all contracts and work on Ambae Island. The COM has also clearly indicated that families that relocate to other areas independently, including to Luganville, as opposed to through official Government evacuation processes to designated

Highlights

- The threat level of the Manaro Voui volcano on Ambae Island is now categorized as “minor eruption”, and has therefore increased from volcanic alert level two to level three.
- The Government of Vanuatu’s Council of Ministers (COM) reinstated the State of Emergency on Ambae for two months – 26 July to 26 September 2018 - and ordered the immediate compulsory evacuation of all people in Ambae to nearby Maewo island.
- UNICEF is adjusting its humanitarian strategy in light of the COM’s evacuation decision, and is currently prioritizing use of emergency funding for activities on Maewo Island. UNICEF is also providing support to Government ministries and clusters to adjust their respective sectoral response plans, and to also address needs of host communities and schools on Maewo Island.

06 August 2018

5,220
# of affected children

11,600
# of affected people

Source: estimate from 2016 mini-census figures

School in Ambae covered with ash.
UNICEF Pacific/Olul/2018
sites are expected to self-fund the move and no Government aid will be provided to them. However, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), has allowed people with disabilities and those with special medical needs to be relocated to either Port Vila or Luganville, where services and facilities are available to meet their special needs.

This latest ash fall was the worst on Ambae Island since the increase in volcanic activity began in September 2017 and further damaged houses and vegetation particularly on southern portions of the Island where ash fall accumulations were highest. More than 1,000 evacuees had assembled at ten in-island evacuation sites (four in east, four in west and two in north-east) as of the end of the reporting period with food and water cited as priority needs.

Provincial authorities evacuated at least 200 residents to safer areas on Ambae Island and 30 others to Maewo Island. Many families from the most severely-affected areas of Ambae Island, including teachers and students, had moved voluntarily to Santo Island, where Vanuatu’s second largest city of Luganville is located. Government estimates that some 1,110 people have moved from Ambae to Santo and around 2,000 families remain. All primary schools and early childhood care and education (ECCE) centres in Ambae Island have been closed since 23 July 2018.

Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination

The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is Vanuatu’s lead Government agency coordinating the response to the state of emergency and as such has been tasked with managing the evacuation of residents from Ambae Island with oversight provided by a relocation task force. The Government triggered at the onset of the recent volcanic eruptions the activation of the cluster system, which is the primary mechanism for planning and coordination of humanitarian response in Vanuatu.

In addition to the extension to the state of emergency and the immediate compulsory evacuation of Ambae Island residents, the COM has called for the following: (1) emergency funding to focus on Maewo Island; (2) immediate construction of roads and water infrastructure at evacuation sites on Maewo Island; and, (3) immediate renovation of roads and public buildings at Loltong, North Pentecost Island to re-establish Penama provincial headquarters.

Following the declaration of state of emergency, the Ministry of Health (MOH) ceased delivering health care services at Lolowai Provincial Hospital on Ambae Island and transferred staff, equipment and patients to Kerepei and Melsisi health centres on Maewo and Pentecost Islands, respectively.
The Government is creating a new provincial capital on Pentecost Island that is expected to include a replacement provincial hospital.

Sixteen host communities (13 large and 5 small) are expected to host at least 8,000 evacuees from Ambae Island. The evacuees are expected to remain with host communities while roads and basic infrastructure is constructed at permanent relocation sites. Four of the sites on Maewo Island will include Sanason in the south with a land area of approximately 600 hectares; Ulu and Naruru at the central part of the island with 300 hectares and 15 hectares, respectively; and, Loloruku in the north with 209 hectares. Only one of these sites is leased while the three others have no title and are therefore owned by their respective communities. The Prime Minister and the Ministry of Justice and Community Services will follow customary law to acquire land required for resettlement.

Seven ships are being made available by the Government for the evacuation – four from Port Vila and three from Luganville. The first ship carrying Ambae Island evacuees departed for Maewo Island on 1 August. The NDMO is also making arrangements to ship humanitarian relief supplies to Maewo Island.

**Humanitarian Strategy**

UNICEF is adjusting its humanitarian strategy in response to the COM decision to enforce compulsory evacuation of Ambae Island residents as it is now clear that the majority of the evacuees will be residing on Maewo Island. UNICEF is also providing support to Government ministries and clusters to adjust their respective sectoral response plans to also focus on the host communities and schools on Maewo Island. Although UNICEF is transferring most its activities from Ambae Island to the Government prescribed relocations sites on Maewo Island, UNICEF continues to support activities in other areas and on other Islands (namely, Santo and Pentecost Islands), where Ambae Island residents who evacuated earlier in the year continue to reside.

**Summary Analysis of Programme Response**

**Education**

The Education Cluster’s response will involve the relocation of two secondary schools on Ambae Island and the absorption of a primary school and ECCE students from Ambae Island into Maewo Island schools. Secondary students who relocated to Santo Island earlier in the year will remain in respective host boarding schools until further notice. Tagaga Secondary School on Ambae Island will be relocated to Melsisi on Pentecost Island and Walaha Secondary School to Nandiutu on Santo Island.

Funds that were originally planned for repair and improvement of school rainwater catchment and distribution of WASH in Schools kits on Ambae Island will be reallocated for use by host schools on Maewo, Pentecost and Santo Islands. UNICEF funds previously transferred to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) will support psychosocial and hygiene awareness activities, including menstrual hygiene management, in host schools.

Education supplies, including school tents, provided from UNICEF and Save the Children are available to support the MOET’s response. NDMO expected a consignment of supplies to leave Port Vila for Maewo Island on 4 August.

**Child Protection**

With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development (MOYSD), and non-governmental partners ADRA Vanuatu and Anglican Church of Melanesia Vanuatu, provided refresher training for staff and volunteers to conduct psychosocial support (PSS) activities in four communities on West Ambae Island. Community leaders (84), including church leaders, teachers, women and youth leaders, were trained as co-facilitators of PSS activities and subsequently helped to roll out PSS activities on West Ambae Island to 590 children (282 girls, 308 boys) and 709 adults (352 women, 357 men). The MOYSD is supporting 23 community volunteers who were selected to serve as community PSS focal points. Save the Children has supported the provision of PSS activities in child-friendly spaces in eastern locations of Ambae Island and is transitioning this support to Maewo Island.

UNICEF has supported a Ministry of Internal Affairs registration campaign that had registered over 6,000 Ambae Island residents as of the end of the reporting period. The distribution of identification cards and civil registration activities are continuing on Maewo and Santo Islands.
UNICEF is working with the Gender and Protection (G&P) Cluster to avoid the separation of children from their families. Efforts are ongoing to ensure people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups are protected and their dignity respected during the evacuation from Ambae Island, with those in need of specialist services and facilities to be relocated to either Port Vila or Luganville. The G&P Cluster deployed two members to Maewo Island to assist the NDMO in ensuring appropriate care is provided during evacuation and resettlement processes. Meanwhile, youth volunteers are being readied for deployment to initiate PSS activities for evacuees in host communities on Maewo.

**Health & Nutrition**

Medical services that had been provided at Ambae Island provincial hospital will be scaled up at two health facilities on Maewo Island, namely in Kerepei and Nasawa, in anticipation of a population surge. Upgrading of equipment, facilities and personnel is required at these health centres to ensure they have the capacity to deliver health care services to meet the anticipated demand. Medical storage units and cold chain equipment will be required at both locations to store medicine and vaccines in accordance with MOH standards.

Health authorities have warned of an increased risk of respiratory illnesses because of continued exposure to volcanic ash, which blanketed Ambae Island and reached Maewo and Pentecost Islands. Red Cross Vanuatu and Save the Children have been distributing respiratory masks and other essential household items.

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

The WASH Cluster will continue to coordinate the provision of water supplies to evacuation sites and affected communities on Ambae Island until all residents have been evacuated to Maewo Island. Water trucks are distributing water from two boreholes: one in Saramata town in the east and the other in Loone in the north-west.

The WASH team completed a quick survey of 19 potential host communities on Maewo Island and recommended 16 with the capacity to accommodate evacuees. An initial WASH cluster plan for the two-month emergency phase was drafted that includes the following key activities: quick fixes of water systems in at least 16 host communities; construction of ventilated improved pit toilets and handwashing stations in host communities; hygiene promotion and distribution of ash-related information, education and communication materials; design and construction of a water system in Loloruku; water trucking; and, the distribution of hygiene kits.

Plans for water supply construction on Ambae Island communities and evacuation sites have been redirected to host communities on Maewo Island. The WASH cluster has prepositioned New Zealand Aid water tanks on Maewo Island in preparation for the provision of support to relocation sites. The WASH cluster is establishing a base of operations in Kerepei on Maewo Island.

**Security**

The danger zone encompasses a 3-km radius from the active vent and areas located in the yellow zone (see map). The VMGD has warned that fallen ash will continue to change the paths and behaviours of streams and creeks, particularly when it rains. The presence of volcanic ash, including sand, gravel and boulders can cause flash flooding of creeks and streams. The risk of landslides is expected to increase during heavy rainfall.
Funding

UNICEF acknowledges the generous contributions from the governments and people of New Zealand and South Korea, as well as the support from the New Zealand National Committee for UNICEF. We also wish to thank partners who have contributed to global thematic humanitarian funding, which has enabled UNICEF to flexibly respond to humanitarian needs arising from the volcanic activity on Ambae in a timely and efficient manner.

Funds have focused on the provision of assistance to the most severely-affected communities and evacuation sites on Ambae Island. Remaining funds, are being re-directed to provide immediate assistance during the evacuation and resettlement in host communities and activities on Maewo and Santo Islands.

Final humanitarian needs are still being determined following the Government’s call for a compulsory evacuation of Ambae Island, UNICEF is therefore revising its humanitarian response and funding requirements. In the meantime, new contributions are needed to support the upgrade hospital and health services in Penama Province; repair and improve water systems in communities; and, help students and learners return to school, among other humanitarian response activities.

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Who to contact for further information:

Sheldon Yett
Representative
UNICEF Pacific
Tel: +679 3300 439
Email: syett@unicef.org

Cate Heinrich
Chief of Communication
UNICEF Pacific
Email: cheinrich@unicef.org
Tel: +679 392 5606

Andrew Parker
Chief of Field Office, Vanuatu
UNICEF Pacific
Email: acparker@unicef.org
Tel: +678 554 5300