

# Alert

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## Vanuatu

# Pacific Island Nation Devastated

Geneva, Sunday 15 March 2015

### 1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

Between Friday 13<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March, category five severe tropical cyclone Pam hit the Pacific Island Nation of Vanuatu. The cyclone was one of the strongest ever recorded in the Pacific Islands with sustained winds of 270km/hr gusting to 360km/hr. The United Nations has stated that Pam could be one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the Pacific. Vanuatu's President, Baldwin Lonsdale, has appealed to the global community for help. Thousands of people are in temporary shelters. Entire communities were severely damaged in some areas. Islands in the north and south of Vanuatu were hit most directly. Whilst eight people have been confirmed dead it is expected that the final death toll will be much higher. Communications are down, many areas are inaccessible and information about civilian safety outside of the capital of Port Vila is not known. Hospital services in the capital of Port Vila are inadequate, clean water is unavailable, electricity services are down, the one international airport was damaged and is closed to commercial operations. It is expected that the total population of around 220,000 people are affected.

### 2. Why is an ACT response needed?

Vanuatu ranks number one on the list of disaster vulnerable countries. The scale of this disaster is well beyond the means of local agencies and the government of Vanuatu to cope with. Whilst strong efforts in disaster preparedness have been implemented for several years, communities outside the capital of Port Vila are particularly vulnerable due to lack of government services and reliance on subsistence farming for survival. Act for Peace, along with other NGOs and the government of Vanuatu have been supporting local communities with disaster preparedness for several years. However disaster response infrastructure is poor, the majority of the population live in unstable dwellings with variable access to clean water and health facilities. A large response is needed to provide lifesaving services including medical, food, WASH and shelter. A longer term response will be required for rebuilding and re-establishing basic infrastructure, homes, schools and livelihoods. There is also unprecedented damage to the country's subsistence agricultural sector. Whilst initial emergency relief activities are essential for saving lives, rebuilding basic infrastructure and restoration of farmlands and livelihoods is essential for the long term.

### 3. National and international response

An informal state of emergency has been announced. Current resources are not sufficient for immediate response or ongoing recovery. The National Disaster Management Organisation (NDMO) is coordinating response efforts. ACT Alliance members including Act for Peace, Uniting World and Caritas Australia work through local church partners and will respond. Act for Peace has worked with the Vanuatu Christian Council for six years on disaster preparedness and will respond to Cyclone Pam through mechanisms established with local government and communities in the badly affected outer islands.

ADRA, UNICEF, Save the Children, Care and World Vision are also responding. The Australian government has sent relief supplies and response staff.

#### **4. ACT Alliance response**

Members of the ACT Australia New Zealand Forum will hold their first coordination meeting at 3pm Sydney time Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March. Agencies are in close contact. There are no ACT Alliance members from Pacific Island Nations at this time.

#### **5. Planned activities**

Information on planned activities from all ACT Australia New Zealand Forum member will be shared after the Forum meets on the 16<sup>th</sup> March. At this stage Act for Peace is proposing Immediate Response (including food and NFI distribution) and Early Recovery (including water restoration and food security) activities.

#### **6. Constraints**

Primary constraints include access, information (due to communications being down) and resources.

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***Forum/Member contact information***

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**Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel ([Line.Hempel@actalliance.org](mailto:Line.Hempel@actalliance.org)).**

**An e-portal has also been opened with the following link to indicate possible funding and assistance:**

**[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OMRbvRpEDTIQF\\_PNhL1YRrR7v7ikEf2TSMGjoB5aSas/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OMRbvRpEDTIQF_PNhL1YRrR7v7ikEf2TSMGjoB5aSas/edit#gid=0)**

**For further information please contact:**

ACT Regional Programme Officer, Gabrielle Bartholomew ([gdb@actalliance.org](mailto:gdb@actalliance.org))

ACT Web Site address: <http://www.actalliance.org>