

ALERT Volcanic Eruption



actalliance

Bangkok

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SITUATION

During the night of Friday the 22 September 2017, the province of Penama in Vanuatu, was elevated to an Alert Level 4 'Moderate eruption state' due to elevated activity of Manaro volcano on the island of Ambae. On Thursday 28 September A State of Emergency was declared for the entire island and on Thursday 28 September and a full, compulsory evacuation of the 11,000 residents of Ambae island was ordered to nearby islands of Espiritu Santo, Pentecost and Maewo. The volcano subsided somewhat and residents that chose to were repatriated by 30th October 2017. On 7th December 2017 the Alert Level was downgraded to 2 'Major Unrest'. **However on Sunday March 18th 2018 the volcano erupted again and the Alert Level was increased to 3 'Minor Eruption State' with emissions of gas, ash and volcanic bombs.** In particular the impact from the continuous outpouring of ash and gas emissions have created hazards including acid rain, flash flooding and landslides, polluted and destroyed water sources, damaged traditional housing, crops and trees, and impacted human health through direct exposure to acid rain and inhalation of fine ash particles. Wind shifts have resulted in almost the entire island being affected, with zones previously marked as 'safe' now experiencing hazards, and a significant proportion of the population on Ambae have relocated to evacuation centres (9 are currently in operation). With contaminated water sources, damaged crops and reduced food supplies in local stores, the population has become reliant on food and water distributions from the Government. On 13 April the Government declared a State of Emergency and are undertaking plans for both temporary and permanent relocation of the Ambae population to adjacent islands. The evacuation from Ambae to Pentecost and Maewo will impact approximately 13% of Vanuatu's total population.

NEEDS

Volcanic activity threatens Ambae homes, crops and livestock, as well as vital infrastructure such as water supply and schools. Longer term impacts of acid rain and ash are likely to affect food security and livelihoods for years to come. The 2017 evacuation resulted in significant disruption and loss of livelihoods and now the same population is being evacuated for the 2nd time in 7 months.

The government is currently anticipating evacuating the population of Ambae to the adjacent Maewo and Pentecost islands. In addition to relocating institutions such as schools and churches (an important place of community gathering) families will be 'starting again' arriving with very little to support themselves, needing to establish gardens and raise livestock – until then being dependent on external assistance and host communities in the receiving islands, which themselves have little infrastructure and supporting logistics to host the influx of communities. Humanitarian needs include:

- sufficient food
- safe shelter and basic non-food items
- basic health services and facilities
- safe drinking water, as well as sanitation and hygiene infrastructure
- livelihood activities
- protection activities

The situation is further compounded for affected people with special needs including people living with disabilities who require additional support to access assistance. Women and children are known to be particularly vulnerable during times of crisis and relocation/repatriation. Students are currently facing disruption to studies which will continue until new permanent schooling is established.

STAKEHOLDERS

The following national and international entities are present and doing their best to respond to the crisis:

- The National Disaster Management Office continue to coordinate the immediate humanitarian response at national level, while continue to coordinate with the provincial government from Penama ,Malampa and Sanma. to implementation relief distribution activities within their respective provinces
- Vanuatu Humanitarian Team agencies; Anglican Overseas Aid, Global Mission Partners, Act for Peace, Anglican Board of Mission are monitoring the situation now. Rotary International recently spent more than \$450,000 upgrading the island's hospital, and they have stepped in to help in the current crisis.
- Anglican Church of Melanesia, ADRA Vanuatu, Vanuatu Christian Council, Vanuatu Church of Christ , Red Cross, French Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are monitoring the situation and providing humanitarian aid to the affected communities
- New Zealand Air Force and Navy are assisting with aerial surveillance and the delivery of relief supplies.

The emergency response is currently being coordinated by the National Disaster Management Office with provincial delegations.

ACT Alliance

ACT Alliance partners have been working in Vanuatu on Ambae since October 2017, assisting local partners in responding to the initial September/October 2017 evacuation and repatriation of people affected by the volcanic eruption, particularly in the areas of gender and child protection as well as peacebuilding and community planning by community and faith leaders. ACT Alliance partners are working in areas affected by the volcanic eruption, and are assessing the impact of the disaster to better understand the needs and vulnerabilities. In addition, ACT Alliance partners are currently monitoring the situation and are preparing a rapid needs assessment to have an in-depth context analysis and better understanding of existing vulnerabilities.

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

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