

## Cyclone Pam: Update for our church partners

Updated 17 March 2015, 11am



World Vision is gravely concerned about the well-being of children and their families affected by the disaster. The cyclone brought intense winds and rain to the island nation, causing extensive damage to infrastructure and electricity supplies, also impacting water supply. Many communities are displaced and the full extent of damage and the death toll is unknown. Below is information of the disaster. We would appreciate your congregation's prayers and support for our neighbours at this time.

### Cyclone Pam

- On Friday night (March 13) Vanuatu faced its largest cyclone in history with Cyclone Pam – a Category 5 – bringing destructive and near-peak intensity winds (up to 275kph) to the island nation.
- Cyclone Pam went through a number of islands across Vanuatu including where the capital Port Vila lies.
- The President of Vanuatu has declared a state of emergency and made an official request for international assistance due to the severe and widespread damage.
- There have been reports from the office of the Prime Minister of Vanuatu that up to 70 per cent of the country's 69,000 households may have been displaced as a result of the cyclone.
- The UN has confirmed 24 people have died but the figure is likely to increase as access to the islands that have currently been unreachable becomes available.
- Most communication lines are down across the islands of Vanuatu and roads blocked by debris which is making it difficult for aid agencies to get in contact with staff to assess damage and check the affected population on other islands.
- There are over 3,300 people sheltering in 37 evacuation centres in Torba and Penam provinces.
- The immediate needs in Vanuatu are clean water, food and household items, health and shelter.

- In Port Vila, there is widespread damage to buildings, as well as electricity, communications and water infrastructure.

### World Vision's response

- World Vision distributed relief items including shelter, hygiene and cookware kits to more than 800 people affected by Cyclone Pam yesterday and plans to reach 20,000 across the affected islands as part of the response.
- World Vision chartered a flight to Tanna Island yesterday to do a rapid needs assessment. Our staff reported utter destruction on the island – homes destroyed and widespread fallen trees. WV is returning to Tanna today (Tuesday) to do further assessment of humanitarian need.
- World Vision chartered its own flight and will be joining Australian military flights to get access to some of the more remote islands that have been unreachable, to assess damage and start responding to need.
- World Vision fears for many islands yet to be contacted who were in the eye of the cyclone. In those communities, people live in thatched homes with few solid buildings to evacuate for safe shelter. Communications remain cut off to many islands. Agencies like World Vision are struggling to account for their own staff.
- World Vision aims to assist people in Port Vila urban areas and people in three other affected provinces (Tafea, Penama and Shefa) with distribution of relief goods.
- Numbers of people and specific program details are to be confirmed after assessments are conducted.
- World Vision is working with Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office and the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team - the NGO coordinating body.
- Priority areas for World Vision response include: food, water and sanitation, shelter, distribution of other essentials, health and child protection.
- Last week, World Vision prepared communities for the impact of Cyclone Pam on Vanuatu. Communities that participated in our disaster-preparedness training sessions, were able to put their plans into action. These Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) trainings have taught communities how to map threats, plan evacuations, and learn valuable search and rescue skills.
- With more than 30 years of experience in Vanuatu and 80 staff based throughout the country, we have been working closely with national and local government disaster response teams and other agencies to monitor the situation, and prepare to respond.
- WV has mobilised the Community Disaster Management Committees it helped form under its DRR project to prepare for Cyclone Pam.

### **World Vision Vanuatu background**

- World Vision has been operating in Vanuatu since 1981 and has strong relationships with local communities, other community-based organisations and the government.
- World Vision currently operates in six provinces: Tafea, Torba, Sanma, Penama, Malampa and Shefa province.
- World Vision Vanuatu implements emergency preparedness, response and development programs, with a focus on DRR, water and sanitation, health, child protection and livelihoods support.
- Given the country's vulnerability to natural disasters, World Vision has been implementing a range of DRR activities. Most notably, World Vision has helped establish Community Disaster Committees to equip communities to prepare and respond to natural disasters. In August 2014, World Vision conducted an emergency simulation to help prepare the national team to respond to emergencies such as this.
- World Vision Vanuatu has a total of 80 staff members, with technical specialists in a range of sectors.

### **Please join us in prayer**

World Vision would appreciate your congregation's prayer support at this time.

Please pray for:

- Children and families in Vanuatu – who have lost loved ones or been left with nothing.
- For those who have not been able to make contact with loved ones in the outer islands – pray that communications will be reestablished.
- For the protection of World Vision staff, as they assess the damage and provide food, water and shelter for those in urgent need.

### **Your support is urgently needed**

- Please donate to World Vision's Cyclone Pam Appeal to help support the people of Vanuatu.
  - Online: [www.worldvision.com.au/cyclonepam](http://www.worldvision.com.au/cyclonepam)
- Your donation will support World Vision's response to Cyclone Pam which will assist affected people with shelter, food, water, sanitation and other essential items.