This Situation Report is issued jointly by the World Health Organization-Western Pacific Regional Office, the Division of Pacific Support and the Vanuatu Country Liaison Office. This covers the period 17-19 March 2015.

HIGHLIGHTS

- WHO continues to work closely with the Ministry of Health of Vanuatu, international partners and aid organizations to assess the damage caused by Cyclone Pam and coordinate the health response.

- The number of deaths caused by the cyclone in Vanuatu has increased from 11 to 13. This number is expected to increase further as more information becomes available.

- An initial rapid health assessment covering some parts of the country revealed the urgent need for clean drinking water, food, shelter, and medical care and supplies.

- WHO is completing a comprehensive assessment that will prioritise health needs and help inform the Ministry of Health in how it deploys its health and emergency resources.

- Medical personnel, emergency responders, search and rescue staff and supplies continue to arrive to aid in the health response.
• The Government of Vanuatu is coordinating the arrival of aid personnel, requiring all aid organizations to register prior to arrival to help ensure their supplies and services are directed to where they are needed the most.

• Cyclone Pam also caused widespread damage in Tuvalu. The Government of Tuvalu has declared a state of emergency. WHO coordinating with the Ministry of Health to ensure it receives the support it needs.

![Image showing the number of confirmed fatalities, people displaced, and evacuation centres](image-url)

Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE**

• Based on preliminary risk assessment, there is a significant risk of infectious disease transmission in Vanuatu after the disaster.

• The main health concerns are the possible widespread transmission of diarrhoeal diseases, respiratory diseases and measles due to potential overcrowding; the concurrent outbreaks of vectorborne diseases due to destruction of infrastructure; and inadequate shelter and long term disability associated with delayed treatment of wounds and injuries.

**Southern Islands:**

• WHO and National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) conducted rapid assessments of several islands.

• On the island of Tanna, many homes have been destroyed or severely damaged and more than 1,000 people have been displaced.

• There is an urgent need for safe drinking water. The island relies on rain water, but many of the rain water tanks were destroyed in the cyclone.

• The Lenakel Hospital on the island of Tanna was badly damaged due to flooding. The roof is intact and one ward remains operational.

• The hospital’s pharmacy building was badly damaged and medicines stored in the facility are no longer usable.

• Most houses in Tanna and Erromango were destroyed or significantly damaged. Roads are blocked with fallen trees. Power is out and phone systems are down.

• WHO is coordinating with the Ministry of Health to bring aid to the affected islands as quickly as possible.
Vila Central Hospital

- The Vila Central Hospital (VCH) is the main tertiary hospital in Vanuatu and it was significantly damaged and portions of it were flooded.

- There remains limited space to accommodate new patients, which are expected increase as roads are cleared and transportation resumes.

- The medical and surgical wards have been repaired and are now operational.

- Work to repair the paediatric ward, central medical stores and catering service building is underway and due to be completed in the coming days.

- Temporary tents were put in place in the hospital’s car park to accommodate patients.

- WHO is advising the Ministry of Health and its child and maternal health program on appropriate nutritional support for inpatients, due to the limited food supply and damage to the kitchen and foodservice facilities.

Evacuation Centres

- About 3 995 people have been displaced in the Port Vila area and are staying in 39 evacuation centres.

- WHO is working with the Ministry of Health and other partners to assess the health challenges at these centres and address them as quickly as possible.

- Running water is in place in nearly every evacuation centre, but access to safe drinking water is still limited.

- Surveillance has been set up at evacuation centres to help identify infectious diseases and other public health-related events.

- Planning is underway to support when possible the movement of people in evacuation centres back to the community to free up resources and infrastructure for the response.

Disease Surveillance and Response

- There is a significant risk that infectious diseases will spread due to flooding, poor sanitary conditions and limited medical care. There have already been reports of diarrheal disease in many places.

- WHO and Ministry of Health have begun syndromic surveillance starting in Port Vila to help quickly identify any infectious disease outbreaks. The Vila Central Hospital is reporting its findings every day, while the health centres are doing so on a weekly.
The syndromes included in the surveillance system are:
- Acute fever and rash
- Prolonged fever
- Influenza-like Illness
- Watery diarrhoea
- Acute jaundice syndrome
- Malaria
- Dengue fever

Vanuatu has had several cases of measles in recent months. Since the cyclone, some suspected cases of measles have been reported and are being followed up on. WHO is working with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health to implement an immunization campaign to vaccine children aged 6 months to five years.

To address the risk of malaria and dengue fever, mosquito nets will be distributed and dengue rapid diagnostic tests will be made available at the Vila Central Hospital.

WHO is deploying experts and resources to investigate and assess reported outbreaks of diarrheal disease.

WHO is supporting the Ministry of Health in communicating with the public via daily radio messages that focus on measles vaccination, diarrheal disease prevention, boiling water, nutrition and protecting against malaria and dengue infection.

Other Health Needs:

WHO is working with the Ministry of Health and other partners to assess and address the need for:
- child and maternal health services to support EPI and nutrition;
- sexual and reproductive health;
- non-communicable diseases, such as treatments for hypertension and diabetes; and
- mental health services to support those dealing with the trauma of this event.

**WHO RESPONSE**

WHO is working closely with the Ministry of Health of Vanuatu, international partner governments, including Australia and New Zealand, and other aid organizations, to coordinate health relief efforts.

Specifically, WHO is providing assistance by:
- supporting case-load management and patient flow through Vila Central Hospital;
- providing administrative support for the registration and assessment of incoming foreign medical teams; and
- providing co-chair support to the response’s health cluster.
• WHO has activated its Emergency Operations Centre and put a support team of multi-disciplinary experts in place to assess needs and deploy critical resources to help in the response including epidemiologists, other health and emergency response experts, medical supplies and other equipment to Vanuatu to assist in the response.

• WHO is coordinating with other governments, including Australia and New Zealand, and other aid organizations the delivering of health support and medical supplies.

CONTACT
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