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Information bulletin Pacific: Tropical Cyclone Pam

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The National Societies of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), are monitoring the situation closely. Initial analysis shows that there is the need to preposition surge capacity in Vanuatu. Vanuatu Red Cross Society has requested for an allocation from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF). While Fiji and Solomon Islands Red Cross Societies have yet to determine if external assistance is required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

Based on further information and rapid assessments to be carried out when safety conditions allow, the National Societies of Fiji and Solomon Islands may request for assistance through the IFRC international disaster response mechanisms.



The Vanuatu Red Cross Society has pre-positioned relief supplies, including food, in preparation for Cyclone Pam.
Photo: Vanuatu Red Cross Society.

The Situation

Tropical Cyclone Pam has been building in intensity in the South Pacific Ocean and reached Category V status as it approached Vanuatu on 13 March 2015. The cyclone remains slow moving and is continuing to intensify as it tracks in a southerly direction from the Solomon Islands through Vanuatu. As Pam moves southwards through Vanuatu, another system is tracking eastwards from the north eastern coast of Australia towards Vanuatu.

The Government of Vanuatu placed four provinces on red alert as Tropical Cyclone Pam passed overhead on 12 March 2015. The cyclone is expected to reach Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila, later in the evening of 13 March 2015.

Initial reports of damages in Vanuatu are provisional with communications and travel difficult. Immediate concerns are focused on outer islands as Pam passes overhead. The provinces of Torba, Sanma, Penama, Malampa are all reporting strong winds and heavy rain with some flooding in lowland and coastal areas. Early indications are of damage to shelter, food gardens and fallen trees. So far, however, there has been no report of casualties.

Evacuation centres across Vanuatu have been mobilized and evacuations have been underway in all provinces. In the capital, Port Vila, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) has identified 12 evacuation centres and people have been moving to the centres since Thursday, 12 March 2015.

Flights across the region remain disrupted and Vanuatu's international airport is closed to all flights.

In Solomon Islands, heavy rain is being experienced in the three provinces of Temotu, Malaita and Western Province. Several landslides and some flooding have also been reported in Malaita. Communications remains a challenge in all provinces.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS)

The VRCS has coordinated with the Vanuatu NDMO to mobilize VRCS volunteers through national radio broadcasts. The VRCS has 200 active volunteers who are being mobilized and another 200 volunteers on standby.

The VRCS headquarters in Port Vila was closed for safety reason at midday 13 March prior to Pam's landfall in Port Vila. The NDMO headquarters is being used as operational base during this period.

In Shefa Province, the VRCS has been tasked by the NDMO to carry out assessments at the evacuation centres in Port Vila, focusing on checking living conditions and minimum water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) standards.

VRCS is the co-lead of the logistics cluster, and in Tafea Province the National Society has been tasked to be in charge of the provincial logistics cluster.

Health and human resource support, particularly in first aid, has been requested for Tafea and Efate islands. VRCS has liaised with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Australian Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross to mobilize 200 first aid kits.

Meantime, following self-examination of its response capacity, the VRCS has determined that it will need technical support from the IFRC and Partner National Societies present in the region to respond effectively should Tropical Cyclone Pam leave significant humanitarian needs in its wake.

Solomon Islands Red Cross Society (SIRCS)

All five SIRCS provincial branches are contributing information on extent of damage due to heavy rains. SIRCS headquarter staff are consolidating information and are preparing a 14-day response plan of action. Twelve volunteers and one branch officer are on standby in Temotu.

On Wednesday, 11 March 2015, SIRCS met with the Solomon Islands NDMO and the initial cluster response teams during which they discussed support and budgets from the government. All clusters are reviewing stocks in country and will undertake initial damage assessments once safety conditions permit.

SIRCS has requested IFRC to consider immediate dispatch of preparedness stocks.

Fiji Red Cross Society (FRCS)

FRCS has established regular communication and monitoring through its branch networks. Preparations are well-advanced and the Western Division branches including Nadi, Lautoka, Rakiraki, Sigatoka, Ba, Tavua, Nalawa are on high alert awaiting effects of Tropical Cyclone Pam.

IFRC

The IFRC Pacific Regional Office (PRO) has been on high alert since Tropical Cyclone Pam was sighted and meteorological projections indicated its imminent impact on several countries. The PRO and the Asia Pacific Zone office continue to monitor the situation closely. The PRO organized a teleconference for concerned partners, to better coordinate the preparedness for response. It continues to provide Host National Societies in the region with relevant up-to-date information from different sectors and sources as well as early warning and preparedness information to facilitate regional support.

Following a request by the VRCS, the PRO will immediately deploy a disaster management delegate and a shelter delegate to Vanuatu to provide operational support to the National Society. A communications delegate may also be deployed by the PRO in collaboration with the New Zealand Red Cross.

The regional shelter delegate has been in contact with other cluster focal points as well as with government shelter lead agencies in Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands to provide support on the analysis of shelter and non-food item stock levels. The support has also extended to determining requirements for additional stocks from regional hubs in Auckland and Brisbane.

On Sunday, 15 March 2015, IFRC will convene a Movement Partner's teleconference to further provide additional information and coordinate support for the response.

Meanwhile, the Asia Pacific Disaster Management Unit (DMU) has deployed an operations coordinator to provide additional operational capacity to the PRO.

Other Movement partners

The Australia Red Cross has offered financial assistance for emergency deployment. A water and sanitation delegate, with recent experience in Vanuatu, is standby for immediate deployment should surge capacity be required in community-based first aid/health and shelter.

The French Red Cross has several staff in Vanuatu with expertise in disaster risk reduction (DRR), water and sanitation, logistics and finance.

The New Zealand Red Cross is sending 200 first aid kits and shelter and non-food item relief supplies to Vanuatu and has released NZD 10,000 (approx. CHF 7,402) to assist with initial assessments.

The ICRC is participating in regional coordination discussions.

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to **inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the **maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.**

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives.
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace.**



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