

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

VANUATU EARTHQUAKE

3 January 2002

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This Information Bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. The Federation has an annual regional appeal for the Pacific (01.40/2002).

The Situation

At approximately 0630 on 3 January 2002 an earthquake struck the seaside capital of Port Vila on the main island of Efate in Vanuatu. The magnitude of the quake was registered at 7.3 on the Richter scale. The epicentre was off the coast of the main island of Vanuatu. There have been three aftershocks. Sea levels are not unusual and a tsunami is not expected. Several buildings in the business district of the town were damaged, including offices of the National Disaster Management Office. A main bridge out of town collapsed and several main roads were blocked by fallen debris. The airport remains open but the Port Vila wharf is cracked and blocked by boulders. Scores of homes have sustained cracks and people are wary of returning to their homes. Over 100 inhabitants from Melemaat and Mele Village fled their homes during the quake. Several people are reported to have been slightly hurt.

Vanuatu (known as the New Hebrides before independence from the UK and France in 1980) is a 1,176 km long chain of 80 islands between the equator and the Tropic of Capricorn (approximately 1,900 km northeast of Brisbane, Australia). Vanuatu covers over 860,000 sq km of the South Pacific, but the land area is only 14,760 sq km. Total population is 182,000. Vanuatu lies squarely on the Pacific Ring of Fire, which causes frequent earth tremors. The archipelago is also prone to volcanic eruptions and seasonal cyclones.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) was immediately in action following the quake. All staff and Port Vila-based volunteers were mobilised to determine the extent of the damage and identify immediate needs. Branches were contacted to assess the reach of the quake, and while both Tanna and Santos Islands were affected, damage was relatively minor.

The National Society headquarters was damaged and the VRCS Operations Centre was moved into a nearby tent. From this makeshift office, teams are providing first aid and psychological support to those in need. A team of volunteers has been on call for evacuation purposes and has also been ensuring that

people return safely back to their homes. Those people who cannot re-enter their homes will be provided temporary shelter in tents by the VRCS. The VRCS is a key member of the National Disaster Emergency Taskforce and has maintained constant communication with the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO). Sufficient relief supplies are in stock locally to cover current needs. No goods in kind are being requested by the VRCS as of this bulletin.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact :

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

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