

VANUATU: EARTHQUAKE/TIDAL WAVE

29 November 1999

Information Bulletin N° 2

The Disaster

An earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter Scale hit Vanuatu, a chain of islands located in the South Pacific, at 12:21 am (local time) on 27 November 1999. The earthquake caused a tidal wave which affected the islands of Pentecost, Ambrym, Paama and Epi. The affected area has a total population of around 12,000. Initial assessments indicate twelve confirmed deaths, with more than 100 injured and thousands left homeless. Six individuals who were seriously injured have been airlifted to the capital of Port Vila for further treatment. There has been extensive damage to roads and properties including private homes, churches and schools and concrete water tankers. Government ministers have flown to the affected area several times in the last three days but have not been able to reach all the affected areas.

Needs and Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Federation has released CHF 50,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to respond to the initial relief needs. The Suva Regional Delegation, in coordination with the National Society, is making arrangements to support the National procurement of the needed relief items. The Head of Regional Delegation in Suva, together with the Vanuatu Red Cross, will be flying to Vanuatu to carry out an assessment of needs. The Australian Red Cross is ready to support the technical health, water and sanitation assessment. Depending on the needs, a Preliminary Appeal may be launched.

Several coordination meetings between the Government of Vanuatu, diplomatic missions, donor agencies and humanitarian organisations have taken place. The Governments' National Disaster Coordination Office indicated the following as the priority needs for 1,000 individuals: shelter materials, non-food items such as blankets, second hand clothes, calico, axes, and bush knives, medicine, food such as rice and tinned meat and fish, water purification tablets, and jerry cans.

The Vanuatu Red Cross is a member of the National Disaster Management Office and has been involved in all coordination meetings. At the request of the government, the Vanuatu Red Cross offered and provided the following items from the Disaster Preparedness containers donated by the Japanese Red Cross for dispatch to the affected areas in Pentecost: 200 tarpaulins, 150 blankets, 13 cooking sets, 20 bales of used clothes, 25 rolls of calico, 1,000 water purification tablets, 50 jerry cans for water.

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The Kuala Lumpur Regional Delegation is supporting the media coverage of this relief operation through its Information Unit.

For further information, please contact Kentaro Nagazumi, Desk Officer; Tel.41-22-730-4273 (email:nagazumi@ifrc.org) or Abbas Gullet, Head of Regional Delegation; Tel.679-311855 (email:ifrcrds@is.com.fj)

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