



The Vanuatu Red Cross Society Emergency Operations Centre was immediately setup outside the office compound in an open space to coordinate the emergency response. (Photo: VRCS).

<p>Appeal No: MDRVU012</p>	<p>IFRC Secretariat Funding requirements: CHF 5 million Federation-wide Funding requirements: TBD</p>	
<p>Glide No: EQ-2024-000227-VUT</p>	<p>People affected: 116,000 people (40 per cent of the population)</p>	<p>People to be assisted: 50,000 (45 per cent of the affected population, 10,000 HHs)</p>
<p>DREF allocation: CHF 750,000</p>	<p>Appeal launched: 18/12/2024</p>	<p>Appeal ends: 31/12/2025</p>

SITUATION OVERVIEW

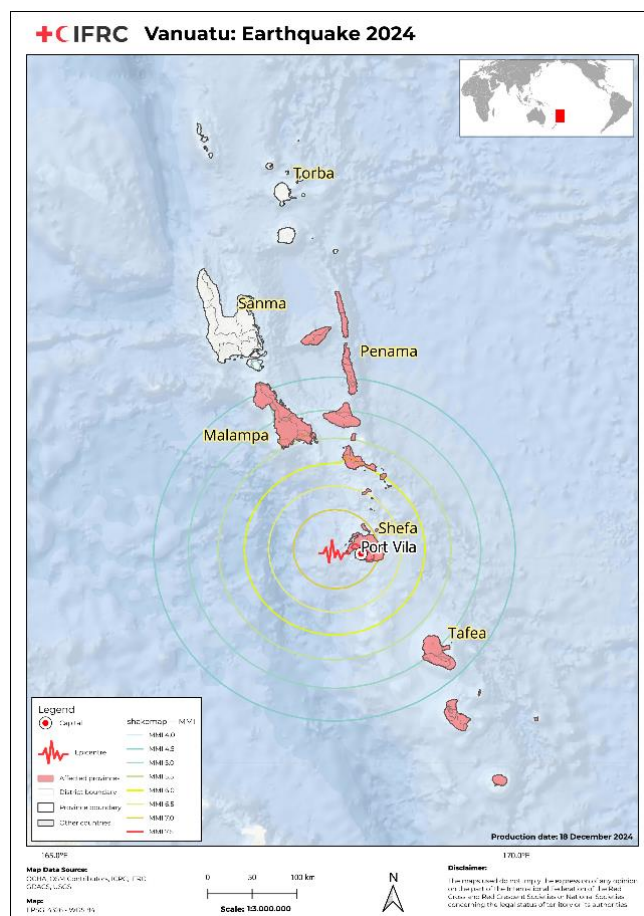
On 17 December 2024, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck 30 kilometres west of Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, causing widespread destruction and creating significant humanitarian needs.¹ The earthquake, which occurred at a depth of 57 km, triggered landslides and extensive damage to homes, infrastructure, and essential services (*PHT – Pacific Humanitarian Team Update 1*). This was followed by several aftershocks, with magnitudes of 5.5, 4.7, and 4.9, further exacerbating the situation (<https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/map>).

Preliminary reports published on 17 December from the Pacific Disaster Centre (PDC) suggest that approximately 116,000 people may have been affected initially, representing 40 per cent of the population, including 73,000 who experienced severe shaking, with the worst impacts concentrated in Port Vila.

The disaster severely disrupted telecommunications, power supply, and water reservoirs leaving many areas without internet or phone services, electricity, and running water. The structural integrity of several key buildings, such as the main hospital and local schools, have been severely compromised. The main airstrip also sustained damage, restricting commercial flights though permitting limited humanitarian operations.

Several buildings in Port Vila’s central business district have collapsed, raising fears for those still trapped in the rubble. This area has been designated a Red Zone and is closed to the public. Additionally, several bridges around Port Vila that connect roads and villages have been damaged, limiting access, while some roads have been blocked by debris from landslides.

USGS data confirms that a total of 73,000 people experienced severe shaking, including 36,000 in Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, as outlined in the table.



MMI	Shaking	Population
I	Not Felt	0 k*
II-III	Weak	0 k*
IV	Light	129 k*
V	Moderate	63 k
VI	Strong	24 k
VII	Very Strong	20 k
VIII	Severe	73 k
IX	Violent	0 k
X	Extreme	0 k

*Estimated exposure only includes population within map area (k = x1,000)
[Modified Mercalli Intensity \(MMI\) scale](#)

The government declared a seven-day State of Emergency, activating the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) and cluster

¹ UNOCHA, [Flash Update Number Two](#), 18 December 2024, accessed on 18 December 2024.

responses. The NEOC is currently operating out of tents set up in the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)'s car park due to concerns about the building's structural integrity, while search and rescue teams are working tirelessly to reach those trapped under rubble. Health services are overwhelmed due to damaged medical infrastructure, which creates an urgent need for medical supplies, clean water, shelter, and essential household items.

The seaport facility, where most commodities arrive in Port Villa, is still functioning; however, access roads have been damaged by landslides. The airport's communication and control tower have also been impacted, suspending commercial flights pending the completion of repairs.

The government has enforced a curfew from 6 PM to 6 AM for the duration of the State of Emergency and requested additional police support from assisting states to help maintain peace and security.

The Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS), supported by the IFRC and its membership, has mobilised volunteers to provide immediate assistance, including health support, assessments, and emergency supplies. However, access challenges and damaged facilities are hindering their ability to scale-up operations. The situation remains critical, with urgent support needed to meet the immediate needs of the affected population and facilitate early recovery efforts.

TARGETING

The response strategy for the Vanuatu earthquake will carefully consider the situational realities and evolving needs, targeting Shefa Province, where the majority of the estimated 116,000 affected individuals from the 254,307 population reside, primarily on the island of Efate. Based on extensive experience in Vanuatu and logistical considerations, the operation will target 10,000 households, or around 50,000 people (45 per cent of the affected population), by providing flexible and relevant support for families, including additional cash and voucher assistance (CVA) top-ups and gender and protection-related support. The response will address urgent gaps while promoting inclusivity and equity in the delivery of assistance.

PLANNED OPERATIONS

Through this Emergency Appeal, the IFRC aims to support the VRCS in the earthquake response during the relief phase moving to the recovery phase, together with ongoing preparedness and resilience building focusing on the following areas:



Integrated assistance

(Shelter, Livelihoods, and Multi-purpose Cash)

Relief Phase:

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, integrated assistance will focus on addressing the urgent needs of affected communities by providing and repairing shelter, delivering essential household items, and offering multi-purpose cash grants (MPCG) for basic needs. These

interventions aim to save lives, provide immediate relief, and help stabilise the most vulnerable households.

Cash-based modalities will be prioritised wherever feasible to ensure flexibility and appropriateness in meeting the diverse and dynamic needs of affected individuals. Emergency shelter support, including the distribution of tarpaulins and other materials, will be provided to those whose homes have been severely damaged or destroyed, offering temporary protection and dignity.

Recovery Phase:

As the situation transitions into recovery, integrated assistance will include activities aimed at rebuilding and restoring community resilience. Support for the rehabilitation of schools damaged by the earthquake will be prioritised to restore education services and provide a safe learning environment for children. In addition to continued support for individual shelter recovery, efforts will extend to collaborating with the Shelter Cluster to address broader shelter needs, ensuring sustainable and resilient solutions for affected communities. These recovery-focused interventions will complement cash-based support and household item distribution to facilitate long-term recovery and stability.

Implementation for Cash for Work programmes will focus on safe and permissible activities outside the Red Zone, such as clearing public spaces and rehabilitating/strengthening community infrastructure such as roads, meeting places, and marketplaces. These activities will contribute to restoring supply chains, revitalising economic activities, and enhancing community resilience while providing affected individuals with a source of income to support their recovery.

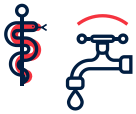
Based on detailed assessment findings, the VRCS will use the Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (eVCA) technique to identify additional risks that may have been overlooked and help strengthen resilience. Activities will focus on training volunteers to implement starter Nature-Based Solutions and risk reduction strategies through active community participation. Simultaneously, the VRCS will collaborate with existing Y-ADAPT and Climate Change programmes to ensure a unified approach, maximise impact, and support long-term sustainability.

Health and Care including Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

(Mental Health and Psychosocial Support/Community Health)

The key objective is to prevent further harm or injury and support the ongoing health and well-being of affected communities. The earthquake will have immediate and longer-term impacts on the health of affected communities. Immediate needs include lifesaving first aid and healthcare, psychosocial support, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) interventions.

The earthquake has significantly damaged infrastructure in affected areas, including Vila central hospital, reducing the ability to support healthcare needs. Damage to two reservoirs has compromised water supply, while reduced access to safe water, adequate sanitation (due to damage), and limited cooking facilities are likely to increase the chance of disease outbreaks. Repairs to water and sanitation infrastructure will ensure safe access, while efforts will focus on promoting resilience, addressing mental health needs, and preventing disease outbreaks. Food security is likely to be impacted due to damage to crops and high demand on produce and food supplies in stores. Support will also include the rehabilitation of primary health care infrastructure, based on the assessment findings, as the population recovers from the impact of the earthquake.



The serious nature of the disaster, ongoing aftershocks, and the extensive damage to infrastructure will mean that many people may be feeling distressed, overwhelmed, or unable to cope. The impact on the mental health and well-being of the population is expected to be significant.

The VRCS, leveraging its trained staff and volunteers, will provide health and hygiene promotion, psychological first aid, and essential items such as hygiene kits, mosquito nets, and water storage supplies while efforts will focus on promoting resilience, addressing mental health needs, and preventing disease outbreaks.

Of particular concern will be the well-being of staff and volunteers as first line responders, who may witness loss and suffering and have their own friends and family members affected. Psychosocial support and care for the VRCS team will be a priority.

Protection and Prevention

(Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI), Community Engagement and Accountability, Migration, Environmental Sustainability, Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery, Education)

The VRCS will prioritise the protection of at-risk groups and the prevention of further risks throughout its response efforts. Services will be aligned with the IFRC Minimum Standard Commitments to Gender and Diversity in Emergencies and the broader Movement-wide commitments and minimum actions. To ensure targeted and inclusive assistance, the VRCS will collect Sex, Age, and Disability Disaggregated Data (SADDD) to inform key indicators for emergency interventions. Additionally, VRCS staff and volunteers will receive ongoing support and training on ethical and compliant behaviours, in line with the organisation's policies, to uphold the principles of fairness, transparency, and respect.

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) will play a critical role in these efforts by promoting transparent communication with affected communities. This will include sharing information about response programming, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement values, community rights, and establishing accessible feedback mechanisms. These systems will enable communities to voice concerns or questions, which will be addressed across all sectors of the response. By integrating survivor-centred and "Do No Harm" approaches, the VRCS aims to provide holistic care and protection to survivors of exploitation, violence, or abuse while ensuring that interventions do not cause further harm. Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) training and the establishment of referral pathways to essential Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) service providers will further ensure that affected communities receive comprehensive and equitable support.



Dedicated funds will be allocated to rehabilitating and strengthening schools, supported by the VRCS on disaster preparedness or youth activities, based on further detailed structural assessments. This rehabilitation and the distribution of emergency kits will enhance Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) capacity among schoolteachers and children. Over the past seven years, the VRCS has implemented a school-based DRR project, establishing itself as a core member of the educational partnership meetings hosted by the Ministry of Education. This fund will primarily focus on VRCS targeted schools in Shefa Province and will support the rehabilitation of school buildings, restoration of educational environments, including clearing rubble, and strengthening the educational system through the provision of emergency kits.

Enabling approaches

The sectors outlined above will be supported and enhanced by the following enabling approaches:

Coordination and Partnerships

The VRCS will collaborate with key ministries, including Health, Transportation, Water, Public Utilities, and Women's Affairs, to ensure adherence to local standards and facilitate the smooth implementation of response efforts, including CVA activities with support from financial and telecommunications institutions.



Country Cluster Delegation (CCD) Suva will coordinate with the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) for alignment with UN and NGO actors, while also working with Participating National Societies to ensure coordination of bilateral activities and effective engagement with respective government agencies. Additionally, an IFRC-wide planning, monitoring, and reporting system will be implemented to capture the collective support and footprint of the IFRC network, centring on the VRCS and leveraging lessons learned from similar operations in recent years.

The completion of the CVA Preparedness Workshop in October 2024 identified competent CVA personnel across National Societies within the Pacific as well as a strong commitment to maximise peer-to-peer support among Pacific National Societies. This will materialise the commitment of the Hanoi Call for Action. The recent completion of the Framework Agreement of three financial service providers (FSPs) and back-to-back CVA implementation for the last three years have equipped the VRCS to implement more quality CVA programmes.

Shelter Cluster Coordination

The humanitarian response in Vanuatu is largely led by the government, with the national Shelter Cluster co-led by the NDMO and VRCS.



The VRCS, with support from the IFRC and its membership, works closely and coordinates with the NDMO during both response and preparedness efforts. The IFRC will support the VRCS in-country and remotely, and additional coordination team members may be recruited to support coordination, information management, and technical areas, depending on the needs of the response and requests from the government. The main coordination structures are currently in Port Vila (Shefa Province), although provincial sub-hubs will be considered for coordination purposes, if needed.

IFRC Secretariat Services



- **Comprehensive Technical Support:** The IFRC CCD team in Suva will provide ongoing technical assistance to the VRCS across critical areas, including National Society Development (NSD), PGI, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, Quality Assurance (PMERQA), Health, WASH, Shelter, and Disaster Risk Management (DRM), with additional financial

management support as required. Relevant staff from the Asia-Pacific Regional Office (APRO) will supplement this support, either remotely or in-country, based on the VRCS and CCD-identified needs.

- **Surge Deployments for Key Functions:** Early-stage surge deployments will be mobilised for Operations Management, Shelter Cluster, CVA, Health, WASH, PMER, and PGI. These deployments, expected to last for three months, will focus on facilitating initial response efforts and supporting the VRCS during the critical early phases of the operation.
- **Sustained Operational Guidance:** Budgetary provisions will ensure continuous support for operational management and Shelter Cluster coordination throughout the Emergency Appeal. Technical guidance will be delivered to the VRCS via the coordinated efforts of CCD Suva, APRO, and surge teams, enabling effective response planning and execution.

National Society Strengthening

To ensure an effective response, a strong emphasis will be placed on enhancing the response capacity of the VRCS and strengthening National Society Development in Emergencies.

- **Rehabilitation and Strengthening of VRCS Infrastructure:** Dedicated funds will be allocated for the detailed structural assessment, rehabilitation, and rebuilding of the VRCS HQ and warehouse to restore operational capacity for both the current response, future operations, and the day-to-day functions of the VRCS. The funding will support the engagement of qualified structural engineers and technical expertise who will assist the VRCS and the Operations Team in determining the recommendations and final costs for repair work to both the HQ building and warehouse. It will also cover the enhancement of logistics management capacity and the procurement of necessary office equipment and supplies damaged during the disaster.
- **National Society Development and Capacity Building:** To support National Society Development, the response will focus on strengthening the VRCS at both HQ and branch levels through the NSDiE strategy, emphasising National Society leadership responsibilities, business continuity, volunteering in emergencies, the relationship between branches and HQ, external relations, coordination and partnerships, human resources, resource mobilisation, and financial sustainability. Components of the Emergency Appeal will incorporate preparedness measures to enhance the capacity of the VRCS to respond to future disasters, particularly during ongoing emergency responses.



The planned response reflects the current situation and is based on the information available at the time of this Emergency Appeal launch. Details of the operation will be updated through the Operational Strategy to be released in the upcoming days. The Operational Strategy will also provide further details on the Federation-wide approach, which includes the response activities of all contributing Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, and the Federation-wide funding requirement.

After 31 December 2025, recovery activities to this disaster will continue under the [IFRC Network Vanuatu Country Plan for 2026](#). The IFRC Network Country Plans consist of an integrated view of ongoing emergency responses and longer-term programming tailored to the needs in the country, as well as a Federation-wide view of the country's actions. This aims to streamline activities under one plan, while still ensuring that the needs of those affected by the disaster are met in an accountable and transparent way. Information will be shared in due course, should there be a need for an extension of the crisis-specific response beyond the above-mentioned timeframe.

Red Cross Red Crescent Footprint in country

Vanuatu Red Cross Society



Core areas of operation	
Shelter Cluster Co-Lead with National Disaster Management Office; First Aid; Health Promotion	
Number of staff:	35
Number of volunteers:	361
Number of branches	6

The VRCS has six branches and four sub-branches – following the decentralised structure of government authorities in the country – with 361 active volunteers available for the response, as well as staff at both

National HQ and branches. The VRCS has 120 Emergency Response Team (ERT) members, 15 National Emergency Response Team (NERT) members, five Pacific Disaster Response Team (PDRT) members, and 100 first aid-trained personnel. Volunteers are trained in DRR, shelter, first aid, health, and hygiene promotion. Warehouses and preparedness containers are either available or being constructed at both the national HQ and branch levels.

The Vanuatu Red Cross Act of 1982 recognises the VRCS as an independent, autonomous, non- governmental organisation, auxiliary to the public authorities of the Republic of Vanuatu in the humanitarian field. As auxiliary, the VRCS maintains a strong and collaborative relationship with the NDMO and is a member of the National Disaster Council. The VRCS also works closely with provincial and village disaster and Community Disaster Climate Change Committees (CDCCCs) and the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team (VHT), through its support to the shelter, WASH, and health cluster.

The VRCS has activated the Emergency Operations Centre and is coordinating with the NDMO as active members in several clusters and the inter-cluster agencies meetings.

The VRCS has a long history of building community resilience to disaster risks,

working with communities, the government, and partner actors to enhance preparedness and resilience to key hazards as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. The VRCS is currently implementing a USAID funded Resilience programme and an EU DevCO funded Resilience programme and is a member of the Climate Action Committee at the national level.

IFRC Membership coordination

The VRCS is coordinating and receiving ongoing support from the IFRC Country Cluster Delegation (CCD) and Asia-Pacific Regional Office (APRO). There are no Participating National Societies present physically in Vanuatu, however bilateral relationships are ongoing through long term programming. The IFRC is supporting the VRCS in coordinating a Federation-wide response together with Participating National Societies, as well as other key Movement partners, leveraging both multilateral and bilateral engagements.

Participating National Societies, including the Australian Red Cross, New Zealand Red Cross, American Red Cross, French Red Cross, and Fiji Red Cross Society are in close contact with the IFRC CCD Office Suva and are working on coordinating support. These National Societies are on stand-by to deploy humanitarian aid, relief and personnel, if needed. Additionally, the New Zealand Red Cross launched a public appeal to support the operations. The IFRC will ensure Federation-wide reporting for the emergency response, demonstrating the collective support of the IFRC membership in providing humanitarian assistance to the affected populations.

Communication materials will be produced to ensure visibility and support for the pressing humanitarian needs in addition to highlighting the Red Cross Red Crescent's response. Close collaboration will be maintained between the communications unit at all levels ensuring a coherent and coordinated communications approach. Written and audio-visual content, in alignment with an appropriate and do no harm approach will be produced, along with relevant social media and digital products. Communications content will be promoted on regional and global IFRC channels, including social media, and shared with National Societies in the IFRC network.

Red Cross Red Crescent Movement coordination

The ICRC has offered support for Restoring Family Links (RFL) services if necessary, and Movement Coordination meetings will be setup as required.

External coordination

The NDMO of Vanuatu is leading the response and is preparing to release a Disaster Response Strategy, which includes the activation of sector clusters within the Humanitarian/Development community. As co-lead for the Shelter sector, the VRCS, with support from the IFRC and the Global Shelter Cluster, is actively assisting with the strategy and facilitating coordination among the government and other organisations active in the cluster. At the Regional level, the IFRC CCD team regularly engages with the Pacific Humanitarian Taskforce to communicate on activities and available support.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation, please contact:

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