



Flash update: Vanuatu Earthquake

Pacific Sub-Regional Office, Fiji



Photo by STR/AFP via Getty Images

Country:	Vanuatu
Emergency type:	Earthquake
Start Date of Crisis:	December 17, 2024
Date Issued:	December 18, 2024
Covering Period:	First 24 hours
Contact Persons:	Anjali Sen (sen@unfpa.org) - Director/ Representative a.i UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office (PSRO)

Key Figures- (Using the MISP calculator for the affected population in Efate Island)



Highlights

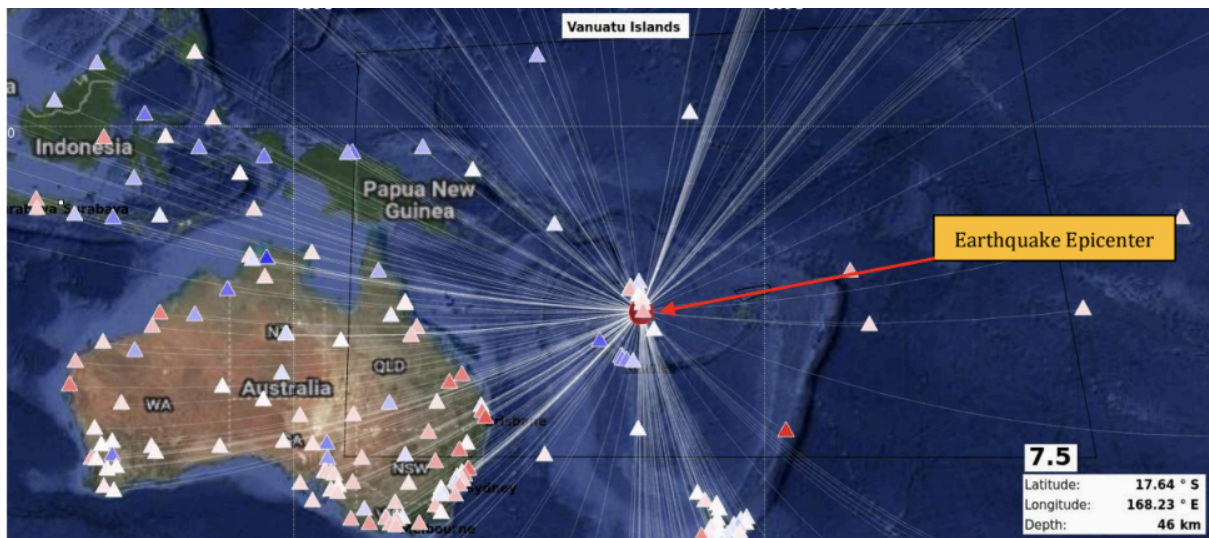
- A major 7.3 earthquake magnitude struck Vanuatu at 12:47 pm local time with the epicenter 37km West of Port Vila at a depth of 10km (NDMO Vanuatu sitrep).
- A tsunami warning was issued at 2:58 pm by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center for Vanuatu, which was retracted after a few hours. Neighbouring countries including Fiji also released tsunami warnings from the Tsunami Watch Advisory issued by the Fiji Mineral Resources Department which was later lifted.
- A State of Emergency has been declared by the Government for the next seven days.
- The Government is appealing for international support on structural assessment of buildings.

Situation Overview

- Four UNFPA Vanuatu staff along with their families and national consultants are all accounted for.
- Telecommunication services, including main network providers Vodafone and Digicel, have been disrupted due to damage and saturation.
- Curfew is in place from 6 am to 6 pm for the next seven days.

- There are 14 confirmed deaths including 4 at Vila Central Hospital, 6 due to landslides, and 4 in Billabong building; and 200 are injured. However, these numbers are expected to rise as search and rescue teams continue.
- Major damage to infrastructure and bridges have been reported, and there is a high likelihood of casualties trapped under collapsed buildings in Port Vila. Access to the main port in Port Vila has been compromised due to severe landslides affecting the international shipping terminal.
- Bauerfield International Airport has been closed until further notice. Access to and from the airport might be compromised due to damaged road infrastructure.
- Two main water reservoirs were reported as damaged, possibly disrupting the water supply to the affected populations in Port Vila, which might cause water shortages, especially drinking water.
- The main referral hospital, Vila Central Hospital, has been compromised with reported structural damages. The operation theatre is reported to be non functional. Only emergency services are operational, and hospitals are overwhelmed with the influx of patients.
- The National Health Cluster plans to conduct a rapid assessment of all outer islands close to the epicenter.
- Respond Global Helpr-1, a health response and logistics support vessel, has activated their mobile Emergency Operation Center onboard to send reports directly to the National Health Emergency Operation Center (NHEOC), the National Disaster Management Office (NMDO), the Information Management Team (IMT) and the Joint Police Operation Center (JPOC) after completing casualty and infrastructure assessments in Port Quimie and Nalema, at South Epi Island. They will continue rapid assessments and monitoring of aftershocks before returning to the Capital on 18 December.¹
- A Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) meeting was held at 6:30 pm on Tuesday 17 December. There was discussion around rapid deployment as and when possible. UNICEF international staff on ground will lead the coordination.

UNFPA Response



Source: Fiji NDMO Situation update

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office (PSRO) swiftly mobilized its resources to contribute to the coordinated humanitarian response. Leveraging its prepositioned supplies funded by USAID’s Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and a roster of trained personnel, UNFPA PSRO prepared a package of assistance ready for

¹ Helpr-1 situation report

deployment from Port Vila and Fiji. This support forms an integral part of the overall potential offer of assistance by the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) to the Government of Vanuatu.

The prepositioned supplies include essential dignity kits and inter-agency reproductive health (IARH) kits, ensuring that the immediate health and protection needs of women, girls, and vulnerable populations are prioritized during the emergency response. In parallel, UNFPA-trained personnel in sexual and reproductive health (SRH), gender-based violence in emergencies (GBViE), and coordination stand ready to provide technical and operational support.

Through this prompt mobilization, UNFPA PSRO reaffirms its commitment to strengthening the resilience of ni-Vanuatu communities and ensuring that humanitarian interventions are swift, inclusive, and responsive to the unique needs of women and girls in the country.

UNFPA stands ready to respond in coordination with the Ministry of Health, the Department of Women, and key NGO partners, including the Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA), the Vanuatu Society for Persons with Disability (VSPD), CARE Vanuatu, and the Vanuatu Family Health Association (VFHA).

Pre-positioned Supplies

In Vanuatu, with our partners:

1. ADRA:
 - 2 tents (48m² and 42m²)
 - 400 Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Kits
 - 398 Dignity Kits
2. Helpr 1:
 - 102 Dignity Kits
 - 100 Menstrual Hygiene Management Kits
3. Department of Women:
 - 100 Dignity Kits
 - 100 Menstrual Hygiene Management Kits
 - 50 Dignity Kits customised for women with disabilities

In Suva, Fiji:

- 94 Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits through the DFAT Regional Prepositioning Initiative
- 900 Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits through the BHA-PSRO Emergency Preparedness Initiative
- 140 Pacific customised Dignity Kits (DK) through the BHA-PSRO Emergency Preparedness Initiative

Technical Capacity in Vanuatu:

- One trained humanitarian coordinator and a designated country focal point
- Two program and finance associates
- Three consultants supporting the Vanuatu Country Office and Ministry of Health

Surge Support

UNFPA PSRO maintains an active roster of retired Pacific midwives trained in the delivery of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) in Crisis. These midwives can be deployed upon request from the Government of Vanuatu.

With prepositioned supplies, technical expertise, and surge capacity, UNFPA is prepared to deliver timely, coordinated, and inclusive support to meet the urgent needs of women, girls, and vulnerable populations in Vanuatu.