

Disaster displacement

Vanuatu country briefing

Acknowledgements

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Cover photo: *An aerial view of the island of Lelepa, Vanuatu* © UNDP Climate, October 2019.



An older woman on Santo eating vegetables sent to her by her relatives. She is one of the few older people that has been able to overcome the trauma of seeing her home on Ambae destroyed and the island covered in volcanic ash © UNICEF/UNI324724/Shing, April 2020.

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Families who were evacuated to Santo during the volcanic eruption on Ambae wait for their roofs to be repaired in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Harold
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Displacement figures at a glance

In 2020:

80,000

Internal displacements by disasters in 2020

64,000

IDPs as of 31 December 2020

In the past decade (2011-2021):

175,000

Internal displacements by disasters from 2011 to 2021

19

Disaster displacement events reported

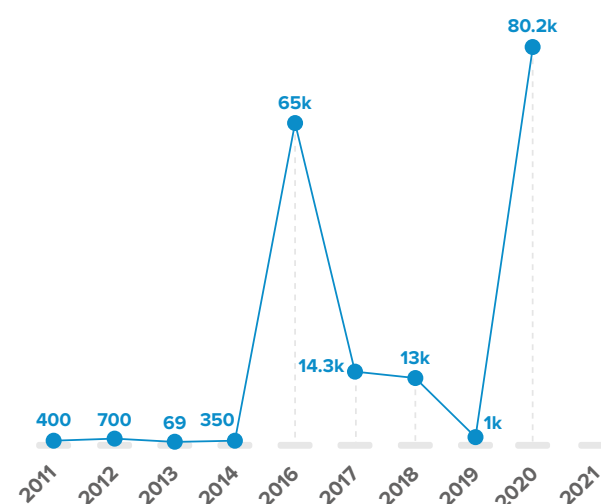


Figure 1: Internal displacements by disasters per year (2011-2021)

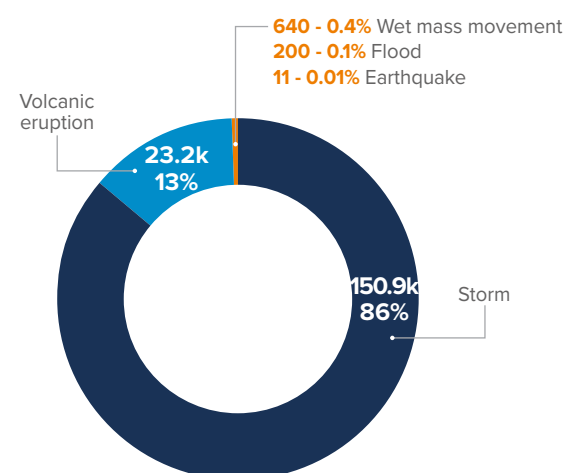


Figure 2: Internal displacements by hazard type (2011-2021)



**In any given year in the future
3,700 people**

on average could be displaced by cyclonic winds, storm surges, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

Figure 3: Average expected number of displacements in any given year for sudden-onset hazards

Disaster displacement in Vanuatu

Drivers of displacement

The island nation of Vanuatu has the highest disaster risk worldwide.¹ More than 60 per cent of its population live within one kilometre of the coast, where they are highly exposed to slow- and sudden-onset hazards, including cyclones, storm surges and sea level rise.² Rapid urbanisation and the growth of settlements in hazard-prone areas are increasing people's exposure and vulnerability to displacement.³

The country ranks 140 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index.⁴ Development challenges, poverty and a reliance on subsistence agriculture compound the population's vulnerability to both the risk and potential impacts of disaster displacement.⁵

The 83 islands of Vanuatu lie in the path of tropical cyclones and are subject to the cycles of El Niño/La Niña Southern Oscillation, which increase the risk of droughts and floods, respectively.⁶ The archipelago also lies on the so-called Ring of Fire, a seismically active area of the Pacific that accounts for 75 per cent of the world's volcanoes and more than 90 per cent of its earthquakes.⁷ The sea level has risen in Vanuatu by an average of six millimetres per year since 1993, well above the global average.⁸ The effects of climate change are threatening infrastructure and livelihoods in low-lying areas, prompting some communities to relocate elsewhere.⁹

About a quarter of Vanuatu's population live in urban areas.¹⁰ Urbanisation and shortages of affordable housing in Vanuatu's cities, as in many Pacific cities, have led to the growth of informal, village-like settlements in urban and peri-urban areas.¹¹ Port Vila, for instance, is home to large informal settlements, which tend to have limited disaster-resilient housing and infrastructure, and are often located in hazard-prone areas with poor access to services.¹² These settlements were devastated by Cyclone Pam in 2015, which left many residents homeless and without access to safe drinking water.¹³

High levels of informal employment and poverty in Vanuatu heighten residents' vulnerability to disasters, which can increase their risk of displacement.¹⁴ Customary land tenure arrangements add to the complexity of issues surrounding displacement.¹⁵ Women, children and people with disabilities face heightened risks during displacement.¹⁶

Despite these challenges, disaster risk management in Vanuatu is strong, and state-led pre-emptive evacuations have been effective in saving lives.¹⁷ Displacement can be temporary, but some people have faced the prospect of protracted displacement, particularly in cases of significant housing destruction. The state has also led permanent community relocations as a longer-term adaptation strategy.¹⁸

Scale of displacement

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) began monitoring data on displacement in Vanuatu in 2009. An "internal displacement" refers to each new forced movement of person within the borders of their country. Over the last decade, IDMC has detected 19 displacement events in Vanuatu, which have triggered almost 175,000 internal displacements. About 87 per cent of these internal displacements were triggered by weather-related events, particularly storms, and 13 per cent by geophysical events. The events that caused the most displacements were:



Storms:

- 2015 Cyclone Pam caused 65,000 internal displacements
- 2020 Tropical Cyclone Harold caused 80,000 internal displacements



Volcanic eruptions:

- 2017 Eruption of Manaro Voui on Ambae island caused 11,000 internal displacements
- 2018 Eruption of Manaro Voui on Ambae island caused 11,000 internal displacements

Cyclone Pam, which devastated the country in March 2015, triggered 65,000 internal displacements and damaged or destroyed about 17,000 buildings.¹⁹ Tropical Cyclone Harold struck Sanma, Malampa and Penama provinces in April 2020, triggering more than 80,000 displacements.²⁰ Humanitarian responses were hampered by sanitary measures and travel restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic.²¹ Assessments suggest that about 16,000 dwellings were damaged and more than 5,000 destroyed by Cyclone Harold.²²

The threat of a possible eruption of Manaro Voui on Ambae prompted authorities to issue two mandatory evacuation orders of the entire island, first in September 2017 and again in July 2018.²³ Eleven thousand evacuees were registered after the second compulsory evacuation order.²⁴ The majority of residents had returned to Ambae by November 2019, but 2,261 were still residing in displacement sites across different islands, including 1,656 on Espiritu Santo and 176 on Maewo.²⁵

In addition to sudden-onset hazards, slow-onset hazards, including sea-level rise and coastal erosion, have led to the

displacement and relocation of whole communities through state-led initiatives. After years of being threatened by high tides and other environmental stresses, the state led the relocation of the inhabitants of the Lateau community, located on Tegua island in the Torba province, to higher ground.²⁶

No internal displacements were recorded in Vanuatu in 2021 as a result of disasters. Disasters occurred in the country, such as the eruption of Yasur volcano on Tanna island of Tafea province in October.²⁷ Official updates are rare, however, and displacement estimates are continually being verified by IDMC with partners before publication.

Sixty-four thousand people were living in internal displacement as a result of disasters in Vanuatu at the end of 2020.²⁸ The number was derived from housing destruction figures following Tropical Cyclone Harold. Because of a lack of information from official sources on the number of people still displaced, no people were recorded to be living in internal displacement as a result of disasters in Vanuatu at the end of 2021.

Displacement risk

The risk of future disaster displacement is determined not only by the risk of hazards, but also by the way in which policies and processes influence people's exposure and vulnerability to hazards.²⁹ Building upon the disaster risk analysis developed by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, IDMC's global disaster displacement risk model assesses the likelihood of such population movements in the future.³⁰

The analysis considers sudden-onset hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclonic winds and storm surges, their likelihood and their potential to cause housing damage, which serves as a proxy for displacement. More information on the methodology is available on IDMC's website. There is currently insufficient data to provide a breakdown of displacement risk by sex, age and disability status.

Figure 4 summarises the main results for Vanuatu, highlighting the high risk of disaster displacement associated with sudden-onset hazards. On average, 3,700 people could be displaced in any given year in the future by earthquakes, tsunamis, storm surges and cyclonic winds. This estimate does not include pre-emptive evacuations or displacements linked with small-scale and very localised events, such as landslides, that can also add up to large numbers of displacements.



As a cyclone moves across an ocean, its winds push the water into a wall as it nears land, creating a storm surge. Impacts depend on coastal topography and the tides. The risk of displacement enters uncharted territory with king tides, which occur when extreme weather events coincide with uncommonly high tides caused when the gravitational pull of the moon and the sun are aligned.³¹

Storm surges represent Vanuatu's highest displacement risk. On average 1,125 people can be expected to be displaced per year considering all the events that could occur over the return period.

Looking at probable maximum displacement (PMD), there is a 33 per cent probability that a storm surge will displace about 10,060 people at some point in the next 20 years. There is a 33 per cent probability that Efate island will experience storm surges of around two to three metres during the same time period.



The archipelago of Vanuatu is in a seismically active area above the collision between the Australia and Pacific tectonic plates. The displacement risk associated with earthquakes is high. On average, 417 people are expected to be displaced per year given all the events that could occur over the return period.

In terms of PMD, there is a 39 per cent probability that an earthquake will displace about 6,290 people at some point in the next 50 years.



The risk from cyclonic winds in Vanuatu is very high. The country is located to the south of the equator in the South Pacific convergence zone, which is known for frequent cyclones.

Cyclones use warm, moist ocean air as fuel to gather force. They stay strong for longer periods in the South Pacific convergence zone because they are not obstructed by large land masses that would deprive them of their fuel and slow them down with greater friction than exists on the sea surface.³²

On average, 2,133 people are expected to be displaced per year considering all the events that could occur over the return period. Winds with speeds greater than 190km/h could strike Vanuatu. They could reach speeds of more than 200km/h in the north and the south of the archipelago. Looking again at PMD, there is a 64 per cent probability that a cyclonic wind will displace about 34,600 people at some point in the next 50 years.



Vanuatu is particularly vulnerable to tsunamis. During a tsunami, waves push a large amount of water above sea level onto the shore. This is known as the run-up. The maximum vertical height above sea level reached by a tsunami onshore is estimated to be around three to four metres for most of the coastal areas at risk. It could be higher than 15 to 20 metres, however, on the west coast of Santo and Malekula islands.

The archipelago is somewhat protected by coral reefs that can dissipate wave energy, but the islands are still vulnerable to significant damage from tsunamis, the effects

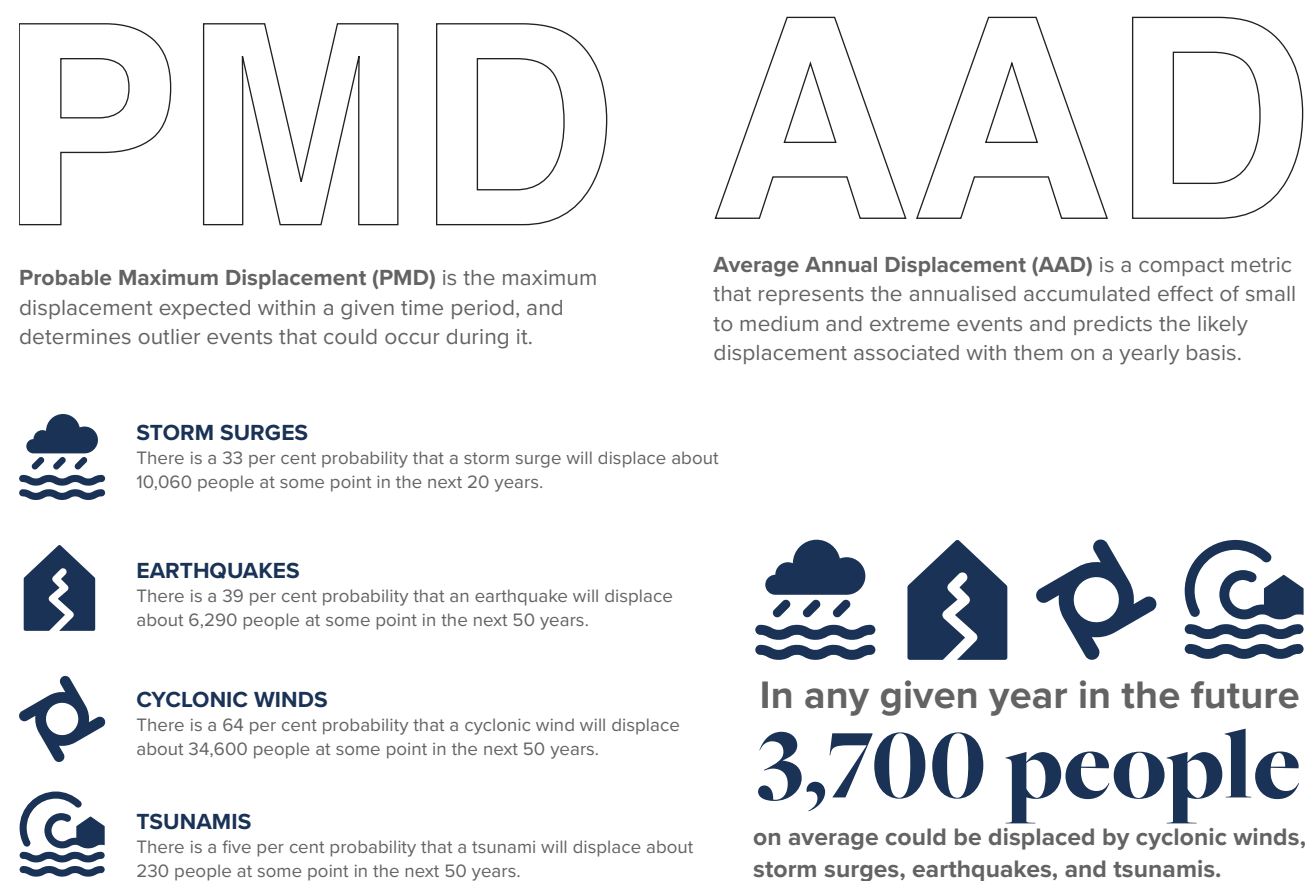


Figure 4: Vanuatu's disaster displacement risk levels and uncertainties for selected sudden-onset hazards

of which are greatly amplified if they coincide with high or king tides.

On average, one person is expected to become displaced per year considering all the events that could occur over the return period. In terms of PMD, there is a five per cent probability that a tsunami will displace about 230 people at some point in the next 50 years.

The relatively small figure is partly the result of the method of relying on housing damage information at the global level, which may lack the granularity to capture all displacement risk, especially for small island states. Investing in disaster risk reduction measures for tsunamis is essential, however, not only to prevent displacement, but also to save lives.

IDMC's disaster displacement risk model relies on a resolution of five square kilometres, and one square kilometre along the coast. This level of granularity is not suitable for informing land use and urban planning decisions, and further analysis must be conducted to refine these initial results. Better data on pre-emptive evacuations and on small-scale events could also help to calibrate the model. Information is also needed on people's vulnerability and exposure to hazards, including economic, social, environmental and governance factors that affect disaster displacement risk, to complement the model's analysis of physical damage to housing.



Only the concrete walls of a health centre in the village of Melsisi, Central Pentecost, are left standing after being struck by Tropical Cyclone Harold © UNICEF/UNI323278/Shing, April 2020.

The cost of disaster displacement

Several assessments have highlighted the significant financial impact of disasters in Vanuatu. The country ranked second in the Asia Pacific region in terms of disaster losses as a percentage of GDP between 1998 and 2009.³³ Economic losses associated with Cyclone Pam in 2015 were estimated to be about US\$449.4 million, or around 64 per cent of Vanuatu's GDP.³⁴ The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment conducted in 2020 estimated combined economic losses from Covid-19 and disasters to be US\$617 million, or about 61 per cent of GDP that year.³⁵

These assessments mostly account for damage and losses to the housing sector, infrastructure and the productive economy, but not for the cost of disaster displacement.

When people are displaced by disasters, they are usually separated from their capital and assets, and their ability to earn a living is often compromised. Displacement also brings with it new costs, which are borne by IDPs themselves, the communities that host them, government agencies and the humanitarian sector. These include the

cost of renting temporary accommodation, and additional expenses for food and electricity incurred by those hosting IDPs in their homes. In some cases, displaced people's income, physical or mental health, and access to education or services can also be jeopardized.

The impacts of displacement on people's livelihoods, housing conditions, health, education, security, social life and environment all have economic consequences, which can be particularly significant in the case of large-scale or protracted displacement. Despite repercussions that can stretch over years or even decades, the economic impacts of disaster displacement are largely unrecorded.

Reports emphasize that women, children, indigenous people and people with disabilities are particularly affected by the negative impacts of disaster displacement in Vanuatu.³⁶ More quantitative and qualitative information, however, is needed on their diverse experiences to inform inclusive and tailored planning and responses.



Figure 5: Internal displacement's impacts



Families on Santo building a new kitchen beside their house, which was damaged by Tropical Cyclone Harold
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Impacts of displacement linked with volcanic activity on Ambae island in 2017 and 2018

To bridge existing knowledge gaps on the differentiated and economic impacts of displacement, IDMC conducted a study on displacement linked with the 2017/2018 Manaro Voui volcanic eruptions on Ambae in December 2021. Key findings are highlighted in this section. The full dataset and further details of the methodology and limitations are available on IDMC’s website.

Methodology, sample and limitations

Increased activity at the Manaro Voui volcano on Ambae led to two compulsory evacuations of the island’s entire population, first in September 2017 and again in July 2018.³⁷ IDMC’s study focused on internally displaced people (IDPs) who had left Ambae and arrived on Santo between September 2017 and January 2020. One hundred and fifty-four IDPs and 153 members of the local non-displaced population of Santo were interviewed using an original survey tool. The survey results were disaggregated by sex, age and disability status, and complemented with key informant interviews.

Interviews were conducted in person by a team of local enumerators. The enumerators travelled to locations where IDPs are known to be clustered on Santo and went door-to-door to interview IDPs and non-displaced respondents. When selected areas were exhausted, a modified snowball technique was used, and respondents were asked if they could identify specific neighbourhoods where other IDPs could be found.

Interviews took place in the following locations: Solomon Hills, Banban, Showground, Chapuis, Mango Station, Side River, Bombua, Sarakata, Deproma and Red Corner. Most displaced respondents lived in rural areas, while non-displaced respondents were spread across both urban and rural areas.

Time and resource constraints meant it was not possible to collect data on each household member. The person

most knowledgeable about household expenditure was interviewed and asked to provide information on their household’s situation and their individual conditions. A soft quota was used to provide a roughly equal split between male and female respondents.

The displaced sample was slightly older than the national population. Forty-three per cent of members of surveyed displaced households were under 18, 50 per cent were aged 18 to 64, and seven percent were 65 years or older. At the national level, 45 per cent of the population are under 18, 52 per cent are aged 18 to 64, while four per cent are above the age of 65.³⁸

The survey results were disaggregated by disability status using the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS). Five per cent of displaced respondents (n=8) were identified as having a disability, while 55 per cent of IDPs experience at least “some difficulties” in the six domains of functioning.³⁹

Due to the sample size and sampling method, the findings do not reflect the experiences of all people displaced by the Ambae volcanic eruptions, nor are they representative of the entire displaced or non-displaced populations living on Santo. Instead, the study aims to provide an indication of common perceptions, trends and insights on the various ways displacement affects individuals and communities.

Evacuations

The majority of displaced respondents relied on government transport and support to evacuate Ambae, including small coastal trading ships and barges. About 24 per cent of surveyed women said they evacuated by their own means and at their own expenses, compared with 14 per cent of surveyed men. People with disabilities faced heightened challenges while evacuating. According to key informants, limited space on the ships and flights used to transport evacuees meant many people with disabilities were forced

to leave behind their assistive devices or were separated from their carers (see Box).

Not all respondents went directly to Santo. Prior to the second evacuation of the entire island, the government initiated a Second Home Relocation Programme on Maewo island. Those that took part in the scheme had the right to keep their land on Ambae but were promised transport to Maewo and access to land, shelter and building supplies.⁴⁰

Box : The challenges facing IDPs with disabilities

The sudden nature of the evacuations meant people with disabilities faced heightened risks to their quality of life and dignity. During the second evacuation, reports emerged that almost 200 evacuees with disabilities were being temporarily housed in a shipping terminal on the Santo wharf, including pregnant women, elderly people and children.⁴¹ Many had been separated from their assistive devices and caregivers, and were sleeping on the cold, hard ground of the terminal, with no privacy and limited access to sanitation facilities.

“Suddenly having to live in a displaced situation en masse, in communal spaces like a classroom or church, is hard enough for a fully abled person. For a disabled person it’s even more challenging.” – **Representative of an international NGO**

Eight per cent of surveyed IDPs took part in the relocation programme before arriving on Santo. Some left Maewo because of a lack of economic opportunities there. Others said they did not feel settled on Maewo or had friends and family on other islands, including Santo. Over half of the displaced respondents had experienced secondary movements since leaving their homes.

Important efforts were made to try to minimise the risks facing evacuees with disabilities. The Vanuatu Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association and others successfully advocated for a flight to be chartered to Ambae to gather evacuees’ assistive devices. With support from local hardware stores, the NGO Field Ready built beds with partitions for people with disabilities who were sleeping in the shipping terminal.⁴² Evacuees with disabilities were also sheltered in the Mormon Church and were prioritised for the Oxfam cash transfer programme supporting IDPs.

Despite these efforts, many IDPs with disabilities were left out of immediate responses and have faced ongoing challenges accessing support throughout their displacement. Surveyed IDPs with disabilities identified access to work, food and participation in community life as key challenges since leaving their homes.

Housing

Evacuation sites were established in church buildings, school classrooms and community halls for evacuees arriving from Ambae. As these sites could not accommodate everyone, many IDPs stayed with host families, in tents or shelters made out of tarpaulins and sticks. In addition to people with disabilities, women and young girls faced heightened protection risks in evacuation sites.

“It was a poor environment for protection. Young girls and women in particular faced a lot of risks due to the communal living and insufficient privacy, toilets and lighting (...) There were incidences of sexual harassment, rape, and sexual abuse.” – **Representative of an international NGO**

Over time, IDPs started buying plots of land in rural areas to build more permanent dwellings. The majority of displaced respondents currently own their home, while 10 per cent live with someone without paying rent. The median value of

their current homes was estimated to be 300,000 Vanuatu Vatu (VUV) (AU\$3,636), which is three times the median value of their homes on Ambae.⁴³ Most non-displaced respondents also own their home, with the median value estimated at about 400,000 VUV (AU\$4,849).

About half of the displaced respondents are less satisfied with their housing conditions now than before their displacement. The higher cost of housing, overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions and less security of tenure were some reasons given for the deterioration in their level of satisfaction. Thirty-five per cent of displaced respondents have a written agreement proving ownership of their current home, compared with 63 per cent of non-displaced respondents.

“Our main security concern involves the land. We don’t have titles to it, so it’s constantly being disputed and we can be forced out at any time.” – **Representative of displaced women.**

The arrival of IDPs has had several positive impacts on the living conditions of the local population. The influx of evacuees prompted town planning authorities to improve the waste disposal system and increase security personnel. A leader of the non-displaced community noted that seeing IDPs buying plots of land and building houses encouraged the local population to seek titles to their land and improve the quality of their housing.

Informants also noted that IDPs paved the way for more infrastructure, including water and electricity, to be established in the remote and rural areas where they settled. Consistent with these insights, about a fifth of non-displaced respondents said they were more satisfied with their housing conditions since IDPs arrived in the area. Sixty-five per cent said they were as satisfied as they were before.

Despite these positive impacts, the arrival of IDPs has placed some pressure on the non-displaced community. Eighty per cent of non-displaced respondents are currently hosting IDPs in their homes.⁴⁴ Of these, nearly 70 per cent are hosting five people or more. Half of the non-displaced respondents report having to pay additional housing expenses since IDPs arrived in the area, including for additional food, supplies and furniture to host IDPs, and higher utility bills. Non-displaced respondents estimate paying on average 18,640 VUV (AU\$226) a month on these additional housing expenses, which represents about 40 per cent of their average monthly income.

Livelihoods

Most surveyed IDPs faced disruptions to their livelihoods as a result of displacement, but women were particularly affected: 33 per cent of surveyed women became unemployed as a result of their displacement, compared with 20 per cent of men. Women also tended to remain unemployed for longer periods than men.

Forty-one per cent of displaced women and 67 per cent of men are currently earning money from work. Gender disparities in access to work do not appear to be linked to differences in the education levels of displaced men and women, however. In fact, 49 per cent of displaced women had received some secondary education or above, compared with 45 per cent of men.

Key informants note that there are more labour opportunities for displaced men in Santo. While men often earn money through construction, gardening or selling

produce at local markets, women tend to look after their families. Gender disparities in access to work were less pronounced amongst non-displaced respondents: 54 per cent of non-displaced women currently work, compared with 58 per cent of men.

The average monthly income from work for displaced respondents is about 40,110 VUV (AU\$486), down from 47,800 VUV (AU\$579) before their displacement. The average monthly income for non-displaced respondents is slightly higher, at 45,560 VUV (AU\$552). The non-displaced population of Santo engage in the same type of work as IDPs, but are also commonly employed in offices or in the tourism sector.

Oxfam established a cash transfer programme to assist those who had recently arrived on Santo. This was the main source of income for many displaced households. Today, about 30 per cent of surveyed IDPs receive support from the government, NGOs and other institutions, which they estimate to be about 16,000 VUV (AU\$194) on average per month. About 40 per cent receive financial support from friends or family.

“One good thing about the cash transfer programme was that it boosted the Luganville economy. We gave the IDPs money, and they spent it on things in Luganville, which increased the supply and demand of goods.” – **Representative of a local NGO working in education**

Despite this support, 60 per cent of IDPs said their household’s financial resources are insufficient to fulfil all their needs and wants now, compared with 28 per cent of non-displaced respondents. The Covid-19 pandemic has delivered a further blow to already struggling households. Cases of infection have remained low, but the closure of Vanuatu’s borders and the subsequent loss of tourism have had severe economic repercussions, affecting the livelihoods of both displaced and non-displaced respondents.

Health

Water and airborne diseases were common among evacuees as a result of the poor and overcrowded conditions in evacuation sites. Many evacuees also experienced emotional trauma due to the lack of privacy in shelters.

Arrangements were made at the hospital to provide IDPs with free treatment during their first few months on Santo. According to a representative of the municipality of Lugan-



Suddenly having to live in a displaced situation en masse, in communal spaces like a classroom or church, is hard enough for a fully abled person. For a disabled person it’s even more challenging.

– *Representative of an international NGO*

ville, authorities also liaised with two hospitals on Ambae to compile a database on evacuees with specific health needs so they could be targeted for assistance. Despite these important efforts, some people with disabilities still missed out on specialised health assistance.

About a fifth of IDPs reported that their physical health had worsened since their displacement, with the results similar for men and women. Thirty per cent of IDPs with at least some functional difficulties said their physical health had worsened, compared with 13 per cent of IDPs without difficulties. Older IDPs were particularly affected: 31 per cent of IDPs above the age of 60 said their physical health had worsened, compared with five per cent of those aged 18 to 24.

There were several improvements in the overall health situation of IDPs, however. About 40 per cent of displaced respondents said they have better access to healthcare on Santo than Ambae, including cheaper transport to the local hospital. For the most part, the arrival of IDPs in the area has not affected the physical health or access to healthcare of non-displaced respondents.

Education

The majority of displaced children from surveyed households experienced breaks in their schooling because of displacement, including 81 per cent of boys and 73 per cent of girls. According to a school teacher on Santo, it took the schools about one month to set up extra classrooms to accommodate the increase in students during the first evacuation, but the process was faster during the second evacuation.

More than half of the children from surveyed displaced households were out of school for one to three months. Girls tended to be out of school for a longer period than boys. Parents with secondary education or above were less likely to report breaks in their children's schooling than parents with primary education or below. Children speaking Bislama as their main language were more likely to experience breaks than those speaking other languages.

“It took my kids and a lot [of] others about a month before they could return to school because it was hard to find a place in the schools around Luganville (...) There were also financial constraints as some of us had to pay for our own evacuation costs.” – **Representative of displaced women**

Before displacement, 93 per cent of girls and 98 per cent of boys from surveyed households attended school. School attendance rates have reduced since displacement, particularly amongst girls: 86 per cent of displaced girls attend school on Santo, compared with 92 per cent of displaced boys. The eight IDPs whose daughters do not go to school on Santo said it was because their daughters need to work, have finished the desired level of schooling, refuse to go to school or are already married. Three respondents cited “other” reasons, which should be investigated further.

Despite the small sample size, the findings suggest that cost remains a barrier to displaced children's education. All displaced respondents whose children do not currently go to school said their household's financial resources are insufficient to fulfil all their needs and wants.

The government covers some education costs in Vanuatu, but most displaced and non-displaced respondents still pay for a share of their children's tuition, and the cost of their uniform, school materials, meals and transportation. The estimated monthly cost of education was on average 4,770 VUV (AU\$58) for displaced respondents and 3,800 VUV (AU\$46) for non-displaced respondents.

Two surveyed IDPs send their sons to school but not their daughters. There were no cases, however, of the reverse. Other studies from Vanuatu suggest that increased pressure on households' incomes following disasters mean boys' education is often prioritised over girls'.⁴⁵ Investments in girls' education are sometimes undervalued due to the expectation that girls will marry young.⁴⁶

Thirty-six per cent of displaced respondents are more satisfied with their children's education on Santo than Ambae, which some linked to the higher quality of teachers and educational infrastructure. Twenty per cent were less satisfied, while 41 per cent were equally as satisfied.

Fifteen per cent of non-displaced children experienced breaks in their schooling after the arrival of IDPs in the area. Children in households hosting IDPs were more affected. For the most part, however, the arrival of IDPs in the area has not negatively affected the education of non-displaced children. School enrolment rates remain high, at 96 per cent. The majority of non-displaced respondents are more satisfied with their children's education than before, largely due to improvements in the training of teachers and educational infrastructure.



It took my kids and a lot [of] others about a month before they could return to school because it was hard to find a place in the schools around Luganville (...) There were also financial constraints as some of us had to pay for our own evacuation costs.

– Representative of displaced women

IDPs’ intentions

Eighty-four per cent of surveyed IDPs said they would eventually like to return home to Ambae, while 11 per cent were unsure. More than half said there was nothing currently preventing them from going back. Others identified several barriers to returning, including a lack of financial means, a lack of access to housing, land and economic opportunities on Ambae, and fear of further eruptions. Education seems to be another important factor. Several key informants noted that as many displaced children are enrolled in school on Santo, their parents are concerned that if they return to Ambae, their education will be disrupted.

Nearly two-thirds of those who do not wish to return or are unsure said Santo was safer from disasters. Others said they feel settled on Santo and have family and friends on the island. Several non-displaced respondents noted that they have welcomed IDPs from Ambae in their community and consider them to be their friends.

“[E]veryone has tried their best to help [the IDPs] in any way they could. Landowners provided plots of land for these people to settle on. There was also a common understanding within the community that these IDPs were vulnerable (...) helping them to adjust to life on a completely new island was paramount.” – **Leader of the non-displaced community**

Ways forward

By revealing some of the immediate and longer-term impacts of disaster displacement, the findings from this case study highlight the importance of strengthening planning and preparedness to minimise the disruptions displacement can cause to people’s livelihoods and education, and the associated protection risks. The differentiated impacts on people with disabilities, women and girls also reinforce the role of disaggregated data in better understanding their intersecting risks and fostering more tailored responses.

Promising efforts are already emerging in this regard. The consortium Disaster READY shared geographic information system mapping data of evacuation centres, including disability access, with Vanuatu’s National Disaster Management Office and the Sanma Provincial Government to provide accurate advice to residents about safe and accessible evacuation points shortly before Tropical Cyclone Harold hit in 2020.⁴⁷ The data was used to advocate for a sepa-

rate displacement cluster and assisted in more targeted assessments following the cyclone.⁴⁸

A key informant from an umbrella organisation of people with disabilities (OPD) also noted that in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Harold, members of OPDs were more actively involved in response sub-clusters to advocate for the protection and inclusion of people with disabilities, older people and other at-risk groups. As a result, people with disabilities were prioritised for assistance by first responders. ODPs continue to advocate for greater engagement of people with disabilities in Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees, which are mandated to facilitate community-based disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

The effects of climate change will increase the frequency and intensity of hazards. Understanding the diverse impacts of disaster displacement is key to fostering more targeted and inclusive recovery, and achieving more sustainable solutions to displacement.

Key Findings

on the impacts of displacement linked with volcanic activity on Ambae island in 2017 and 2018

Surveyed IDPs were often forced to move multiple times after leaving their homes:



80% of non-displaced respondents are hosting IDPs in their homes



Displacement has negatively affected IDPs’ livelihoods:



Displacement disrupted children’s education:



84% of IDPs want to return to Ambae eventually. Key barriers to return include:



Preventing and responding to disaster displacement

Capacity

A country's capacity to prevent and respond to internal displacement depends on the scale, drivers and impacts of the displacement it is faced with, as well as the resources it dedicates to addressing the phenomenon.⁴⁹ Policies, frameworks, strategies or plans focused on or including disaster displacement are a clear indication of a government's commitment as well as a useful guide for its action and that of its partners.

These policies must be accompanied by sufficient financial, technical and human resources to be implemented. Lastly, information on internal displacement, including the number of IDPs and people at risk of future displacement is needed. Information on IDPs' location, needs, and how marginalised groups are particularly affected is essential to tailor effective interventions.

Vanuatu has positioned itself as a global leader in developing policies to address the risks and impacts of disaster displacement, and it dedicates significant resources to their implementation. Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and the International Organization for Migration's (IOM's) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), local authorities and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement collect data on displacement. Additional disaggregation of the data on IDPs by sex, disability status and age could improve knowledge on displaced people's needs.

Policies

The National Advisory Board on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (NAB), which is comprised of government and non-government members, is Vanuatu's supreme policymaking and advisory body for all disaster risk reduction and climate change programmes.⁵⁰

Following the devastation caused by Cyclone Pam in 2015, several new policies and guidelines were introduced to strengthen the country's ability to address climate change and disaster risks and enhance responses to displacement.⁵¹ These include:

- Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016–2030 (CCDRR);⁵²
- National Guidelines for Selection and Assessment of Evacuation Centres 2016 (NGSAEC);⁵³
- Mass Evacuation in Natural Disasters (MEND) Guide;⁵⁴
- National Cyclone Support Plan 2016–2017 (NCSP);⁵⁵ and
- Country Preparedness Package 2017 (CPP).⁵⁶

These policies built on earlier instruments, such as the National Disaster Act 2000 and the National Adaptation Programme for Action 2007, and include measures to prevent and prepare for displacement, protect IDPs and support them to achieve durable solutions.⁵⁷ The CCDRR, for example, calls on stakeholders to enhance early warning systems and provide special support to IDPs.⁵⁸

The NGSAEC set out detailed criteria for selecting and assessing evacuation centres.⁵⁹ They note, for instance, that evacuation centres should ideally be fitted with ramps and an appropriate design to provide unimpeded access to IDPs with disabilities. They also set out minimum requirements for gender and protection aspects, including gender-segregated toilets, appropriate lighting in dark areas, and child-friendly spaces. The MEND Guide provides operational guidance to emergency responders to support the evacuation of communities at risk in the context of volcanic eruptions.⁶⁰

Other important disaster risk reduction (DRR) instruments include the Disaster Risk Management Act of 2019 and the National Land Subdivision Policy.⁶¹ The latter establishes minimum DRR standards for subdivisions, which are critical in light of rapid urban growth and the need for more resilient settlements.



A local woman weaving a basket on the island of Epi, where a project took place to improve road infrastructure to increase resilience to climate change-related risks
© UNDP Climate, August 2011.



Vanuatu was the first country in the Pacific to enact a specific policy on displacement. Launched in 2018, the National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-induced Displacement (NPCCDD) is regarded as one of the most comprehensive and innovative policies of its kind and draws from the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and other international standards.⁶² It provides a common framework to assist populations affected by disaster displacement and sets out strategic priority areas for interventions aimed at addressing displacement and facilitating IDPs’ successful return, local integration and planned relocation.⁶³

These strategic priority areas include mainstreaming displacement and migration considerations into land management, housing and environmental planning, and ensuring all people affected by displacement have equal access to health, education and other services. The NPCCDD highlights the need for planning to be responsive to the different risks faced by certain groups, such as women, youth, children and people with disabilities. It also recognizes that preserving traditional knowledge can increase the cultural resilience of communities facing displacement and support cultural continuity in new locations.

In promoting an inclusive and evidence-based approach, the NPCCDD calls for improved data collection on displacement and prioritizes community-led approaches that aim to build local capacity and guarantee the regular consultation and participation of affected communities.

Implementation

Significant resources have been invested to implement such policies. Domestically, Vanuatu’s government allocates one of the highest levels of funding to DRR and climate change in the world, and this is complemented by substantial international assistance.⁶⁴ About 15 per cent of the national budget was dedicated towards improving resilience and natural resource management in the 2020 financial year.⁶⁵

The NDMO, which is overseen by the National Disaster Committee, is responsible for implementing policies, budgeting and coordinating responses.⁶⁶ Provincial and Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees (PDCCCs and CDCCCs) coordinate DRR activities at the sub-national level. CDCCCs, whose members are mainly volunteers from the community, conduct vulnerability

assessments and assist with evacuations, data collection and early response during disasters, among other activities.⁶⁷

Disaster READY in Vanuatu, a consortium of six Australian NGOs and more than 15 local partners, delivers risk reduction, adaptation and emergency response programming across the country.⁶⁸ The consortium focuses on building the capacity of PDCCCs and CDCCCs to respond to local disaster events.⁶⁹ It strives for a balanced gender representation, stronger youth voice and greater inclusion of people with disabilities in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. In response to the evacuations from Ambae, for instance, its partners trained the CDCCCs to ensure that the immediate needs of evacuees, including food, water and shelter, could be met.⁷⁰

The institutional arrangements in place in Vanuatu highlight several areas of good practice, including the strong integration between climate change adaptation and DRR, and the important role played by community-level mechanisms in preparedness and responses to disaster displacement.⁷¹ The NAB also serves as a promising example of how having a centralised body in charge of DRR and climate change programmes and the allocation of relevant funding can enhance coordination and the efficient utilisation of resources.

There are aspects that could be strengthened, however. For instance, a recent review found that the fact that CDCCCs rely heavily on volunteers and lack dedicated or consistent resources from the government could threaten their sustainability.⁷² NGOs provide support and training, but some communities have to fundraise to implement preparedness activities.⁷³ In addition, a 2020 review that found there is a lack of dedicated domestic funding when it comes to gender- and disability-inclusive DRR and limited infrastructure for monitoring and reporting on progress on this issue.⁷⁴

Despite Vanuatu’s strong disaster risk management, greater investments are still needed to strengthen local mechanisms and capabilities to prevent and respond to disaster displacement and reduce the reliance on external actors. This was highlighted in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Harold, when Covid-related travel restrictions meant overseas humanitarian workers and cargo were delayed in reaching IDPs, leaving many without shelter or clean water.⁷⁵

Data

IDMC triangulates information from a range of sources to inform its displacement data for Vanuatu. More than a third of the data comes from government authorities or national or regional disaster authorities. The NDMO publishes data on the number of people internally displaced as a result of major disasters. Data on the number of people internally displaced by major disasters is disaggregated by location at the sub-national level, but not by sex, age or disability status.

Sixteen per cent of the data IDMC analyses comes from UN agencies, including IOM’s DTM, which has been operational

in Vanuatu since 2018. In addition to tracking movements in response to evacuation orders, IOM-DTM conducts site assessments and surveys on return intentions to establish the needs of people affected by disasters, in coordination with the NDMO.⁷⁶ The remaining sources of information include the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, media, clusters and consortia, and NGOs and civil society. Post-disaster needs assessments are another source of useful information on the needs of people affected by disasters.⁷⁷

Developing a centralised procedure to systematically collect disaggregated data following all disasters would strengthen monitoring of disaster displacement in Vanuatu and foster more inclusive planning and responses.

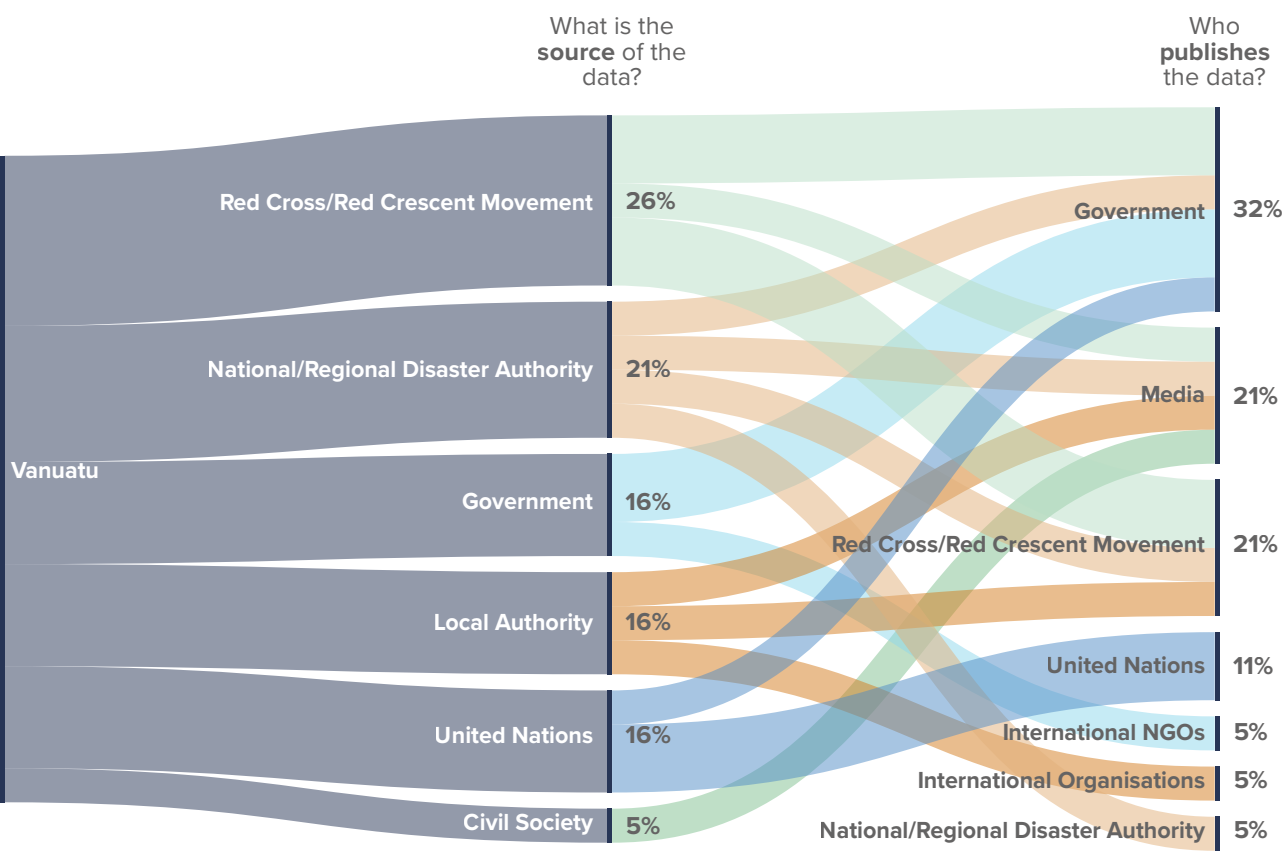


Figure 6: Sources of IDMC’s displacement data for Vanuatu

1

Vanuatu is heavily affected by disaster displacement, with 175,000 internal displacements recorded over the past decade.

2

Human activities, including rapid urbanisation, increase the risk of disaster displacement.

3

On average, 3,700 people could be displaced in any given year in the future by earthquakes, tsunamis, storm surges and cyclonic winds.

4

Vanuatu's efforts to prevent and respond to disaster displacement are an example of good practice, with comprehensive policies.

5

Disaster displacement risk analyses could be improved with more granular and systematic data on pre-emptive evacuations and on small-scale events.

6

Better data on displaced people's sex, age, disability status and other key socioeconomic characteristics is essential to design more effective and inclusive planning and responses.



The island of Lelepa, Vanuatu, where an innovative community-owned solar station brings clean, affordable and reliable electricity to households, improving their livelihoods © UNDP Climate, November 2019.

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A young girl stands outside her damaged home on Santo in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Harold. She and her family had been evacuated to Santo during the volcanic eruptions on Ambae. "We had to leave Ambae because of a disaster and now we are facing another disaster. It makes life very difficult for us." © UNICEF/UNI324718/Shing, April 2020.

Every day, people flee conflict and disasters and become displaced inside their own countries. IDMC provides data and analysis and supports partners to identify and implement solutions to internal displacement.

Join us as we work to make real and lasting change for internally displaced people in the decade ahead.



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