



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for
International
Development

Washington D.C.
20523

VANUATU - Cyclones

Date: January 16-21, 1985

Location: The northern part of the archipelago, including the islands of Santo, Ambrym, Malekula, Pentecost, Ambae, and Malo, in the Republic of Vanuatu

No. Dead: Nine

No. Affected: 20-25% of the total population (approximately 117,500)

Damage: 75% of the copra crop destroyed or damaged; most homes, schools, clinics, and other structures destroyed; many fishing and transport boats damaged

The Disaster

The Republic of Vanuatu was hard hit by a series of three cyclones during the period of January 16 through January 21: Cyclone Eric, Cyclone Nigel, and finally, Cyclone Odette. Heavy-to-moderate rains from Cyclone Eric broke a drought on Vanuatu, and the storm drifted eastward towards Fiji, where its destructive force was more strongly felt. The combined force of the three cyclones, however, extensively damaged communities on several of Vanuatu's islands and disrupted inter-island transport.

Casualties were relatively low. A boat was sunk, with eight people drowned, and one person was killed on Ambae, where few structures were left standing. Approximately 2,000 people were reported homeless on Santo, where many village bush dwellings were flattened, and communications were disrupted due to flooding of the telephone exchange.

Loss of a major portion of the copra production was expected to severely hurt export earnings and the economy in general.

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Action Taken by the Government of Vanuatu (GOV)

After assessing the damage on the major islands in the northern part of Vanuatu and finding thousands homeless, the GOV established a disaster relief and reconstruction fund, and coordinated international donations.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government

On January 23, the Chief of Mission at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, determined that a state of emergency existed in Vanuatu and donated \$25,000 to the GOV disaster relief and reconstruction fund. (There are no formal relations between the U.S. and Vanuatu, although the country is friendly to the U.S. and informal diplomatic contact is maintained.)

TOTAL \$25,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported

Assistance Provided by the International Community

ADRA/Australia - provided a tractor, valued at \$12,131, and 75 bales of clothing, value not reported.

Australia - flew in four survey teams by helicopter to the island of Santo; also sent six C-130 planeloads of tarpaulins, plastic sheeting, ropes, medical supplies, three MT of clothing, and 15 MT of rice; value not reported.

France - donated a planeload of food, flown in from Noumea, New Caledonia; value not reported.

New Zealand - pledged an unknown amount.

Papua New Guinea - pledged approximately \$11,000.

UNDRO - made a cash grant of \$10,000.

United Kingdom - donated \$50,000 for immediate food purchases.

TOTAL \$83,131