



Survey flight view of eruption and ash cloud, 7 Mar 2026. Photo: Unity Airlines

Appeal: MDRVU013	Total DREF Allocation: CHF 80,000	Hazard: Volcanic Eruption	Country: Vanuatu
People at Risk: 4,684 people	People Targeted: 830 people	People Assisted: 1,314 people	Event Onset: Sudden
Operation Start Date: 20-03-2026	Operational End Date: 31-05-2026	Total Operating Timeframe: 45 days	Publication Date: 31-08-2026
Targeted Regions: Penama			

The major donors and partners of the IFRC-DREF include the Red Cross Societies and governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, China, Czech, Canada, Denmark, German, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, and the Netherlands, as well as DG ECHO, Mondelez Foundation, and other corporate and private donors. The IFRC, on behalf of the National Society, would like to extend thanks to all for their generous contributions.

Event development

Update regarding the event’s development

The anticipated event did not fully materialise into a major volcanic eruption. Ambae Volcano remained at Alert Level 3, indicating a minor eruption.

Monitoring through July 2026 confirmed that the volcano continued to emit smoke, gas and ash, with volcanic glow visible at the summit. However, the activity remained within the designated three-kilometre danger zone around the active vents, and the likelihood of escalation to a moderate eruption was assessed as low.

Risks from ashfall, volcanic gases, acid rain and contaminated water sources remain, particularly for nearby and downwind communities. These hazards may continue to affect water supplies, subsistence gardens, health and livelihoods. Residents have been advised to remain outside the designated danger zone, avoid streams during heavy rainfall and continue following official Vanuatu Meteorology & Geo-hazards Department (VMGD) advisories.

Source Information

Source Name	Source Link
1. Penama Provincial Updates	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BSUHKLwVL/
2. Unity Airlines Vanuatu	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1G5QmSpro8/
3. Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazards Department	https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1GpD5wnjDS/

Implementation

	Sector	Activities	Budget (CHF)	Expenditure
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 Early Actions	WASH	- Distribution and replenishment of bottled water -440 cartons x 1.5liters - Training for volunteers on safe water awareness	CHF 58,559	CHF 31,835
	Health (public)	- Training of volunteers - Printing of IEC materials - Distribution and replenishment of MHM- 400 kits - Distribution and replenishment of Solar lamps- 166HH - Distribution and replenishment of masks- 166 HH*100 pieces - Distribution and replenishment of protective hats- 166HH*5 - Awareness activities - Protection risk awareness		
	Shelter	Community and volunteers training on Build Back Better		
	NS Strengthening	- Feedback mechanism in communities - Volunteer induction - Shipment of items - Logistics cost (transport from warehouse to wharf, boat to branch office) - HQ logistics volunteer - Deployment of Penama Branch Officer from Pentecost to Ambae - Communication - HR cost - EOC operational cost - Field deployment transportation		
 Early Response	NS Strengthening	- HQ staff deployment to Ambae - Movement of volunteers from home to branch office - Volunteer accommodation during deployment - Staff accommodation during deployment - Staff per diems (HQ staff) - Monitoring costs - Refreshments for field deployment teams - Overhead 5%	CHF 16,441	CHF 17,956
	Health (public)	- Promote health awareness - Distribute protective items where needed, and provide first aid assistance through community aid posts		
	WASH	Facilitating access to safe drinking water and reinforcing safe water practices to prevent waterborne disease outbreaks during the emergency phase.		
Sub-total			CHF 75,000	CHF 49,791
Indirect Cost			CHF 5,000	CHF 5,000
Total			CHF 80,000	CHF 54,791

Total Assisted Population

Assisted Women	-	Rural	-
Assisted Girls (under 18)	-	Urban	-
Assisted Men	-	People with disabilities (estimated)	-
Assisted Boys (under 18)	-		
Total Population Assisted	1,314		
Total Targeted Population	830		





DREF Operation Final Report (CHF)

Date from: 1 Mar 2026 to 31 Jul 2026

MDRVU013 - Vanuatu - Volcanic Eruption Imminent

Operating timeframe: Start date: 20-Mar-2026 End date: 31-May-2026

Appeal launch date: 23-Mar-2026

I. Summary

	Actual (CHF)
Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	80,000
DREF Response Pillar	
DREF Anticipatory Pillar	80,000
Expenditure	-53,045
Closing Balance	26,955

II. Expenditure by planned operations / enabling approaches

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
PO01 - Shelter and Basic Household Items			
PO02 - Livelihoods			
PO03 - Multi-purpose Cash			
PO04 - Health			
PO05 - Water, Sanitation & Hygiene			
PO06 - Protection, Gender and Inclusion			
PO07 - Education			
PO08 - Migration			
PO09 - Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery	80,000	53,045	26,955
PO10 - Community Engagement and Accountability			
PO11 - Environmental Sustainability			
Planned Operations Total	80,000	53,045	26,955
EA01 - Coordination and Partnerships			
EA02 - Secretariat Services			
EA03 - National Society Strengthening			
Total	80,000	53,045	26,955

Prepared on
Internal

Page 1 of 2

[Click here for the complete financial report](#)

Explain any variances or modifications to the implemented activities

All planned early-response activities were implemented as intended, and no significant modifications to the planned activities were required. Although the volcanic activity did not escalate into a major eruption, the activities were completed in response to the ongoing ashfall and the needs identified in affected communities.

Of the total DREF budget of CHF 80,000, CHF 58,559 was allocated to Early Actions, against which CHF 31,835 was spent, resulting in an underspend of CHF 26,724. This underspend was mainly attributable to lower procurement costs, supplier discounts and some staff transportation being provided free of charge. Early Response expenditure amounted to CHF 17,956 against an allocation of CHF 16,441, resulting in an over expenditure of CHF 1,515. This additional expenditure was covered through an internal budget shift and remained within the allowable 10 per cent DREF budget flexibility threshold; therefore, a formal budget revision was not required.



The remaining balance of CHF 26,955 has been returned to the DREF fund by VRCS.

Mitigation efforts and achievements.

The volcanic event materialized as an ongoing minor eruption and ashfall but did not escalate into a major eruption. As ashfall was already affecting communities when the DREF was activated, not all actions were implemented before the initial impact. However, the Imminent DREF enabled VRCS to act early before any possible escalation or further deterioration. A response remained necessary because communities were already experiencing contaminated water sources, damage to gardens, health risks and protection concerns.

The early-response activities covered National Society strengthening, public health and WASH. VRCS implemented the following early actions:

- * VRCS Headquarters staff were deployed to Ambae to support the field operation.
- * Operational support was provided for the movement of volunteers from their homes to the branch office, volunteer and staff accommodation, staff per diems, refreshments for field teams and monitoring activities. These arrangements enabled staff and volunteers to mobilise and remain operational throughout the deployment.
- * Relief items were securely packed and loaded onto the HELPR 1 vessel in Port Vila.
- * The VRCS field team was briefed on the operational objectives, logistics arrangements and coordination requirements before travelling to Ambae.
- * A total of 29 volunteers, comprising 21 males and 8 females, were registered and inducted. All volunteers signed the VRCS Volunteer and Safeguarding Policies.
- * Volunteers received Safeguarding and PGI orientation covering the Code of Conduct, PSEA, child protection, Do No Harm, confidentiality, accountability, safe distributions and feedback mechanisms.
- * Safe Shelter orientation was provided to strengthen volunteers' ability to advise communities on reducing shelter risks associated with ashfall and severe weather.
- * Epidemic Control for Volunteers orientation covered hygiene promotion, disease prevention, first aid, handwashing and safe water handling.
- * Public health awareness was promoted within the affected communities. Protective items were distributed where needed, and first-aid support was provided through available community aid posts.
- * Access to safe drinking water was facilitated, while hygiene promotion and safe water practices were reinforced to reduce the risk of waterborne diseases during the emergency.
- * Volunteers were familiarized with the contents and correct handling of relief items to ensure transparent, consistent and fair distributions.
- * A Mini Emergency Operations Centre was established at the Ambae Sub-Branch to support task allocation, reporting, information management and communication between the field team, VRCS Headquarters, PEOC and partners.

Upon arrival in Ambae, the relief items were safely offloaded from the HELPR 1 vessel and transported by truck to the distribution points in coordination with the Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Committee and other partners. Regular planning calls and operational updates supported timely decision-making and alignment with provincial response priorities.

The operation reached 263 households, representing approximately 1,314 people, with health and relief assistance. The main achievements included:

- * Health awareness, first aid, hygiene kits, face masks, hats and MHM assistance for approximately 1,314 people.
- * Solar lanterns for 219 people, improving household safety and security at night.
- * Safe Shelter and Build Back Better training and awareness for 1,241 people.
- * Distribution of 160 cartons of safe drinking water to eight schools in South Ambae.
- * Distribution of an additional 504 cartons of safe drinking water to affected households.

The operation assisted 263 households (1,314 people), compared with the planned target of 166 households (830 people), representing a 58 per cent increase. The original people target was calculated using an average household size of five people (166 households × 5 people). During field registration, more affected households requiring assistance were identified in Wards 2 and 3 than initially anticipated, and the available relief supplies enabled VRCS to extend assistance to these additional households. The actual reach of 1,314 people was not estimated using the average household size; it represents the total number of household members recorded in the final VRCS registration and distribution lists. The overall figure is not the sum of the separate sectoral reach figures, which included overlapping beneficiaries.

Water distribution increased from 440 cartons planned to 664 cartons distributed, comprising 504 cartons for households and 160 cartons for eight schools. These actions helped reduce exposure to contaminated water and volcanic ash, supported safer hygiene and



water-handling practices, strengthened household preparedness and promoted the dignity and safety of women, girls and other vulnerable groups. The deployment and operational support provided under National Society strengthening also enabled VRCS staff and volunteers to deliver and monitor the response effectively.

The DREF response targeted Wards 2 and 3 in South Ambae. Ward 4 was outside the approved response area and therefore did not receive assistance under this operation. However, the field team conducted observations because communities there were also experiencing vulnerabilities. The observations identified contaminated water sources, damaged gardens, child protection and psychosocial concerns, gaps in maternal and child health services, MHM needs and approximately 10 people with disabilities requiring targeted support. These findings were documented to inform future planning, referrals and possible follow-up support.

The post-distribution monitoring (PDM) was conducted in Sakau, Lovunbanga, Lolvele and Solkave, where NFI distributions had previously taken place. The monitoring team used structured questionnaires developed in KoboToolbox and administered on tablets. VRCS staff and volunteers conducted face-to-face interviews with 44 households, representing 233 household members, while applying protection, gender and inclusion considerations throughout the process. Of the 44 respondents, 29 were male and 15 were female. Seven respondents were aged 19–29 years (four male and three female), 21 were aged 30–39 years (15 male and six female), and 16 were aged 40–49 years (10 male and six female). Selected beneficiaries were also interviewed using a digital voice recorder to document detailed success stories and the wider impact of the assistance.

All surveyed households expressed satisfaction with the registration, information-sharing and distribution processes and reported that the assistance had helped them cope with the emergency. Hygiene kits, solar lanterns and safe drinking water were identified as the most useful forms of assistance. No respondents reported receiving damaged or unusable items.

Procurement was completed for safe drinking water, hygiene kits, MHM kits, face masks, hats, first aid kits and solar lanterns. The items were transported from Port Vila, offloaded in Ambae and distributed to the targeted communities and schools. Although some transport delays occurred during implementation, the planned procurement and distribution activities were completed. Procurement savings resulted from supplier discounts and free transport support rather than the cancellation of planned activities.

Lessons learnt and challenges

Strong coordination between VRCS Headquarters, the Penama field team, PEOC, Area Administrators, community disaster committees, volunteers and logistics partners contributed significantly to the successful implementation of the operation. The Mini EOC provided a clear structure for task allocation, reporting and communication. Early volunteer induction, technical orientation and familiarization with relief items also supported safe, accountable and consistent distributions.

The main operational challenges were transport delays during volunteer mobilization, rainfall affecting planned activities, poor road conditions and weak telecommunications. These conditions made it difficult to reach some communities and maintain regular communication between field teams and headquarters. Future operations should include stronger transport contingency arrangements, early coordination with vessel and logistics providers, additional time for remote locations and engagement with telecommunications service providers.

The PDM confirmed the value of early communication, face-to-face interviews and flexible scheduling. Some households were unavailable during initial monitoring visits, while funerals, weddings and other community events required the team to adjust the schedule. Working through community representatives and conducting repeat visits helped address these challenges.

The PDM found that only 13 of the 44 surveyed households (30 per cent) recalled being informed about how to provide feedback or make a complaint. Three households (7 per cent) raised complaints or concerns during or after the distribution, primarily regarding the beneficiary selection and distribution criteria. These concerns were communicated through village chiefs, Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees (CDCCCs), or directly to VRCS volunteers. Issues that could be addressed at the village level were resolved locally, with volunteers explaining the targeting criteria and reasons for allocating relief items. Where local resolution was not possible, the established process allowed concerns to be escalated to the Provincial Secretary-General. All three reported cases received a response and were resolved and closed; however, the exact response and closure timeframes were not systematically recorded. Future distributions should clearly communicate the feedback and complaints mechanism, including available channels and escalation procedures, during registration, community awareness activities and distribution. VRCS should also maintain a feedback register documenting each case, the response provided, closure status and timeframe. Information should be available in accessible formats for women, older people, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Communities consistently requested additional drinking water, larger solar lanterns, vegetable seedlings and gardening tools. Future volcanic responses should consider combining relief distributions with early livelihood recovery support. Tarpaulins should also be pre-positioned for protecting traditional homes and food gardens from ashfall.



The observations in Ward 4 demonstrated the importance of monitoring needs outside the initially approved response area. Future operations should establish a clear process for validating newly identified needs, revising geographic targeting where justified or referring those needs to government and humanitarian partners.

Local volunteer capacity should continue to be strengthened through refresher training in safe shelter, epidemic control, first aid, safeguarding and PGI. Maintaining trained volunteers and pre-positioned relief items on Ambae would support faster action during future volcanic emergencies.

For the complementary EVCA activity, poor road conditions, insufficient advance community consultation and the limited three-day timeframe affected implementation. Future EVCA exercises should allow at least five days, include earlier consultation with community leaders and provide follow-up sessions to validate the assessment findings.



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