

2 January 2025

Joint Statement

Over VUV750 million from FRANZ partners in rapid response

Vanuatu Earthquake Response

Under the FRANZ Arrangement for disaster coordination in the Pacific, France, Australia and New Zealand have cooperated closely to provide rapid assistance to support the needs of the Vanuatu Government. Immediately following the devastating 7.2 earthquake, FRANZ partners convened to coordinate offers of assistance to the Government of Vanuatu and stood ready to respond to urgent and immediate requests.

Together, FRANZ partners have supported the Government of Vanuatu's own response with more than VUV 750 million of humanitarian assistance, including over 15,000 tonnes of humanitarian emergency and medical supplies as well as other essential equipment including satellite internet terminals to re-establish communications delivered over 20 flights.

FRANZ coordination mechanisms have been active between capitals (Paris, Canberra and Wellington) and with senior officials in Port Vila, with meetings held on a daily basis during the peak of the crisis. FRANZ has also worked to ensure close coordination with other international partners, including the US, the UK, Japan, the European Union through the activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Immediate response

Within the first few hours of the disaster response, FRANZ partners had coordinated the deployment of surveillance flights to scope and identify damage impacts. Partners activated disaster response mechanisms to deploy within 24 hours to provide practical support to Vanuatu's first responders including search and rescue, further surveillance, medical support and humanitarian supplies.

Three urban search and rescue teams were deployed (one heavy, and two medium sized) to support search and rescue efforts, clearance and damage and assessment of ongoing hazards of landslides and flash foods. Teams worked together to prioritise tasks and meet the needs of local authorities. Specialist engineering and other experts were deployed by FRANZ partners focused on assessment and securing of critical buildings and infrastructure, including schools, evacuation centres, government buildings and the airport and South Paray wharf. Personnel trained in the production of drinking water were deployed to set up treatment units and distribute drinking water.

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Two medical support teams (one 6-person, one 3-person) were deployed to assist with immediate coordination and needs assessments. A further emergency medical team (17-person) was deployed to meet urgent surgical needs, working alongside colleagues in the Vanuatu Central Hospital. Further support is being provided to the Ministry of Health and Shefa Provincial Health, such as strengthening health promotion messaging, delivery of equipment and supplies, and conducting multi-sectoral rapid assessments on 12 islands across Shefa Province. Psycho-social support teams have been deployed to support first responders and the community to recover from the disaster.

Three humanitarian coordination teams were deployed to support Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) to provide coordination and administrative support and to work with humanitarian cluster groups to collect and share data on essential response needs.

Police from FRANZ partners were deployed to assist the Vanuatu Police Force to assist command and control and disaster victim identification.

FRANZ partners are providing funding to the Vanuatu Red Cross and local NGOs through respective national red cross societies and national NGOs. This has supported immediate needs and early recovery.

Next steps

As our immediate support in the aftermath of the earthquake begins to wind down, FRANZ partners remain committed to supporting Vanuatu and are already considering how to work with Vanuatu as it recovers from the earthquake's impact. The Government of Vanuatu-convened donor coordination meeting on 2 January will be a critical step in that process.

ENDS

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