

# Protracted displacement of the population of Ambae island, Vanuatu, during the 2017-2018 eruptions of Manaro Voui volcano: lessons for future forced migration in the Pacific

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# Some general considerations for working in the Pacific

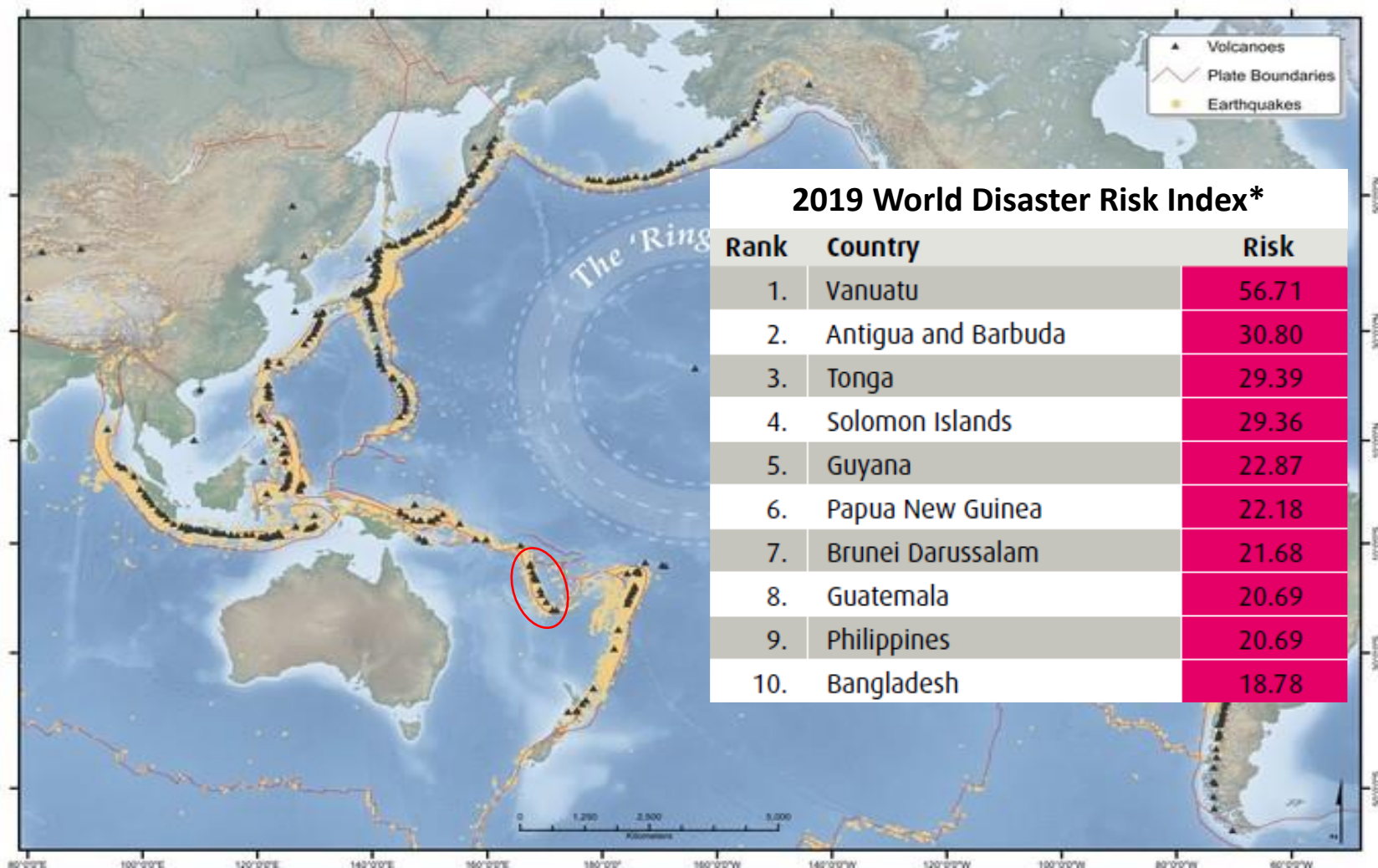
- ‘The Pacific’ is not homogeneous! Each country has its own cultural practices and protocols.
  - Greetings, ceremonies, dress code, gift giving etc
- Expect strong involvement of faith-based organisations
- Logistics are hard – expect delays and disruptions.
- Work with local officials.
- Consider whether you need translation support.
- Get the necessary work/research permits and ethical approval.
- Be mindful of your demand on local resources



**GOV.VU**

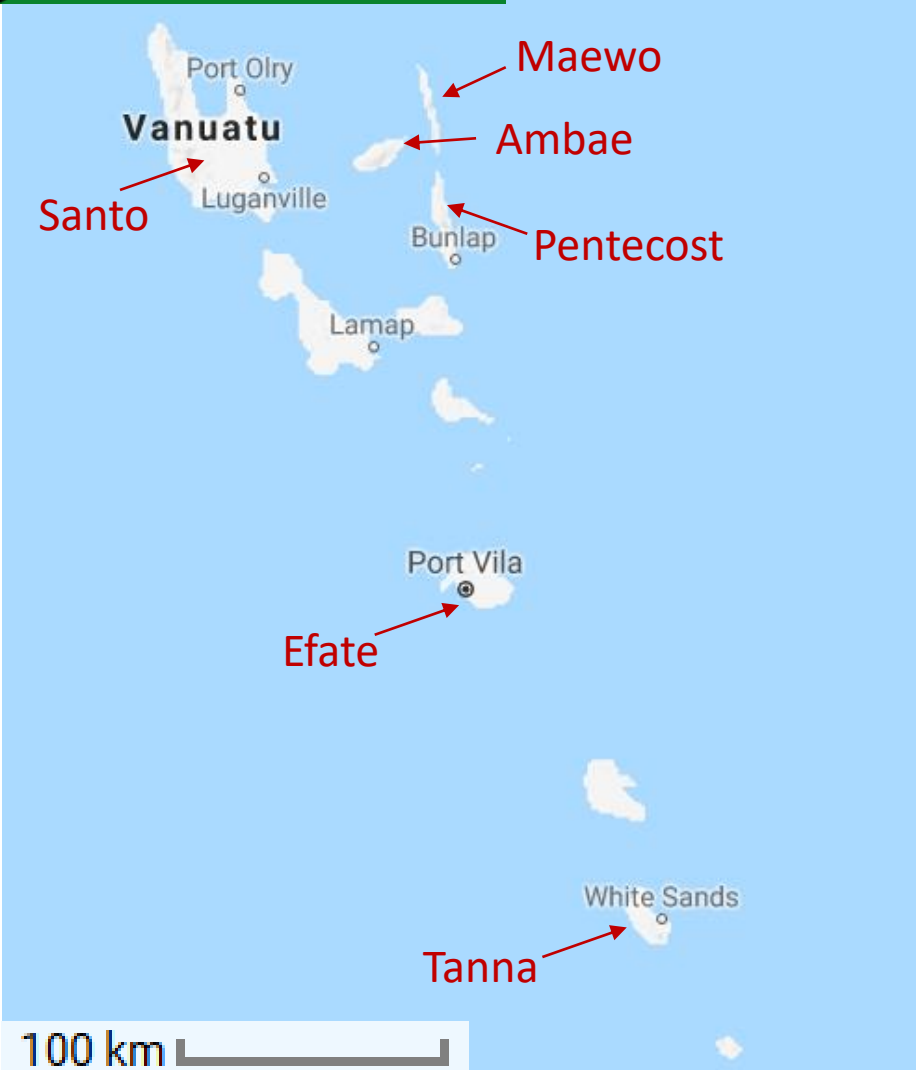


# Vanuatu hazardscape



\*Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict, Ruhr University Bochum

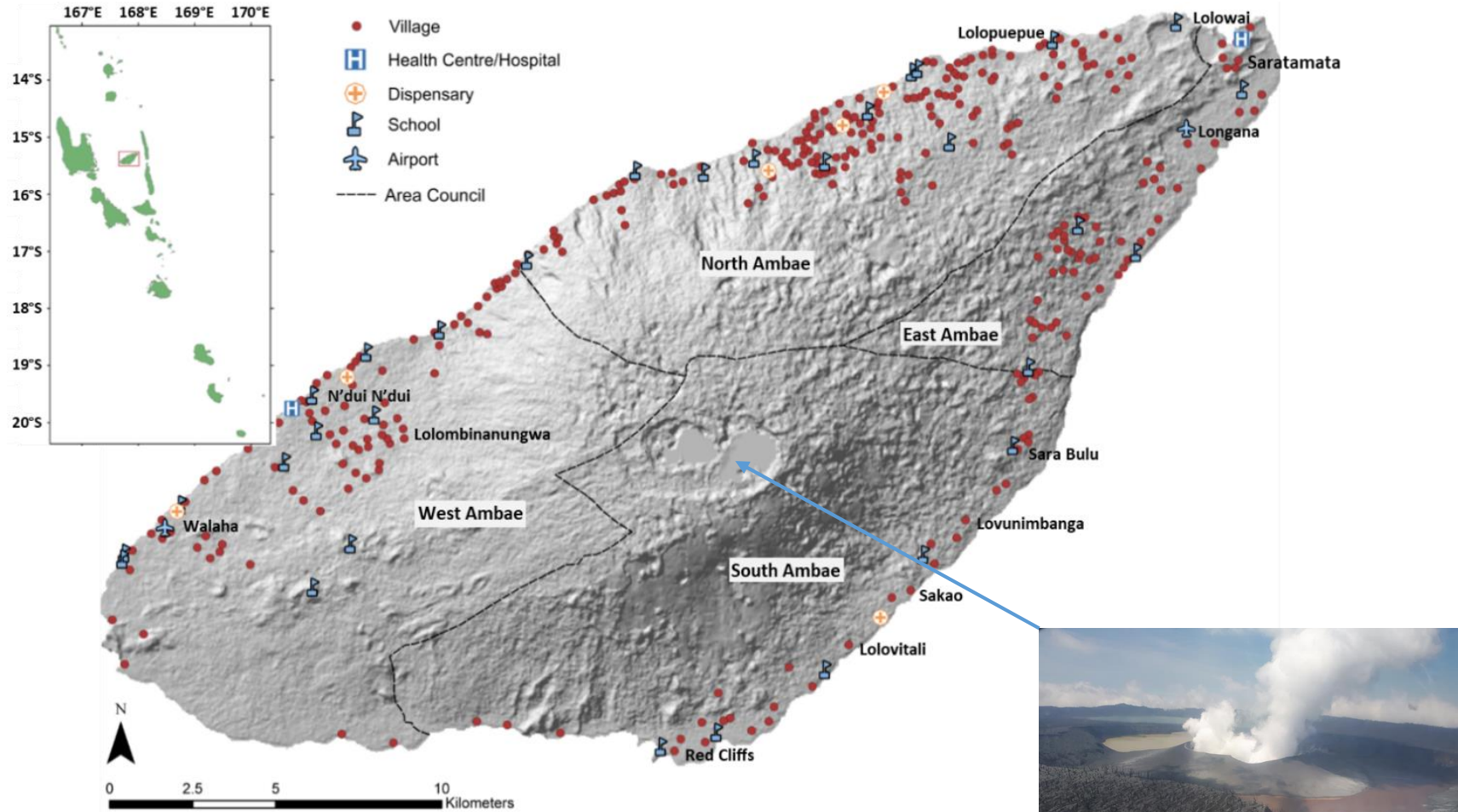




# Vanuatu

- First settlers: Melanesian people
- Became a republic in 1980
- Three official languages (Bislama, English, French)
  - 113 indigenous languages
- Population 272,459 (2016 mini-census)
- > 80% live in rural, isolated villages
- Transport difficult within and between islands
- Very limited infrastructure

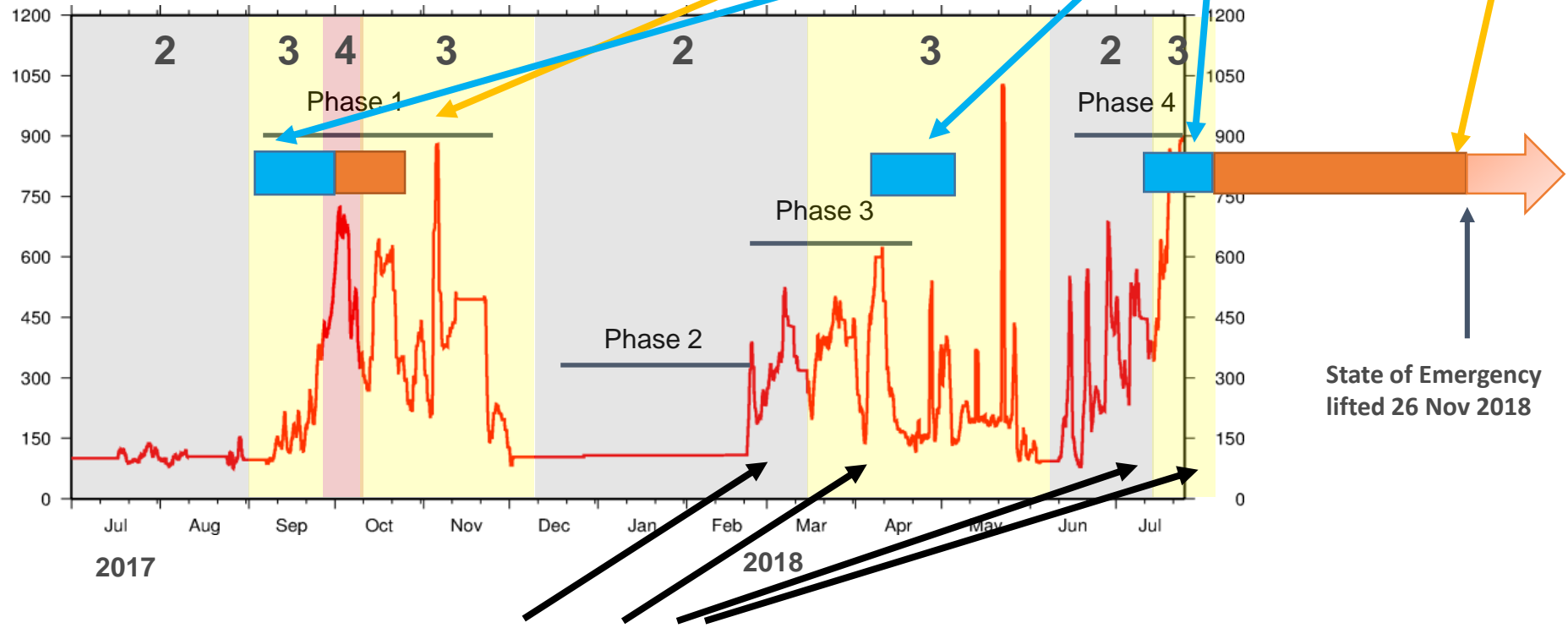
# Ambae Island/Manaro Voui volcano



# Eruption chronology

Off-island evacuation  
(compulsory whole island evac)

Within-island evacuation



State of Emergency  
lifted 26 Nov 2018

NZ Science Team Field Visits  
- MFAT: NZ AID funded

# October 2017 evacuation

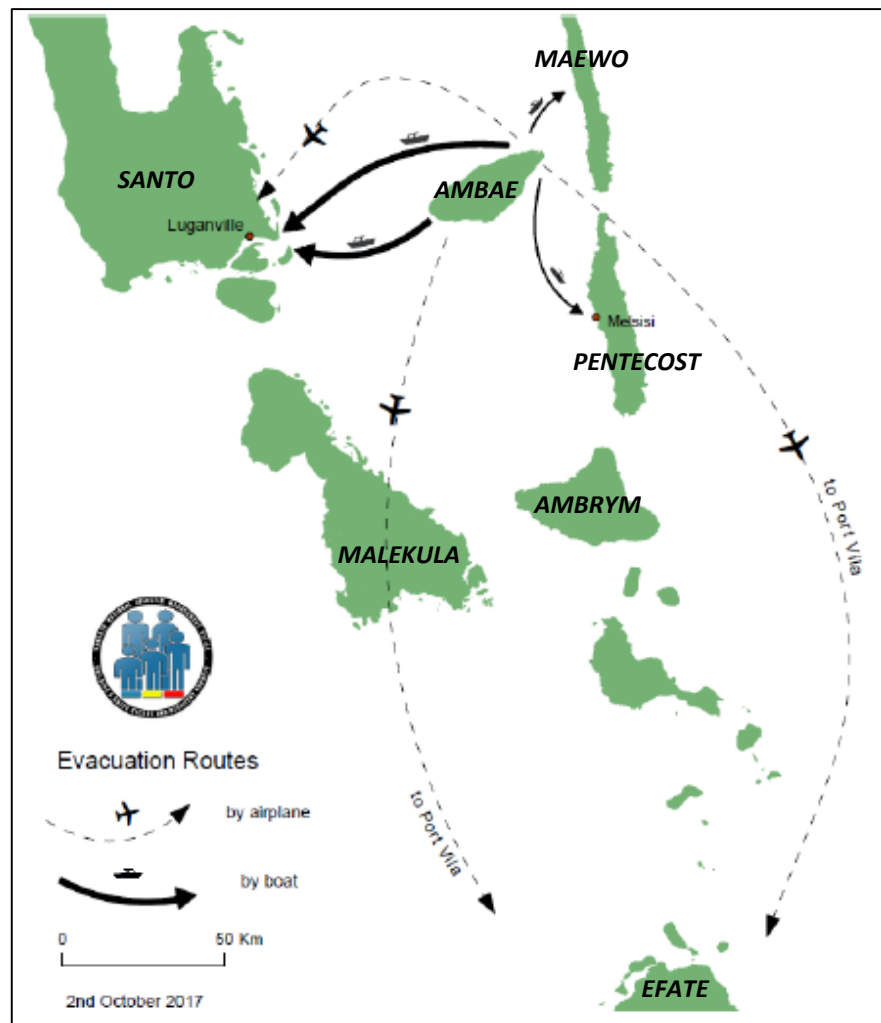




# First off-island evacuation: October 2017

Host island	#IDPs (approx.)
Santo	8,300
Maewo	1,900
Pentecost	1,000
Port Vila (Efate)	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,700</b>

**Within-island:** 1-28 Sept  
**Off island:** 29 Sept – 21 Oct  
**Repatriation:** 22 Oct – 1 Nov





# The second off-island evacuation of Ambae:

- Official evacuation ordered and completed by 12 August 2018
- Approx 3000 Ambae residents evacuated to Maewo on a government-supported 'second home' scheme
- Others unofficially evacuated to other islands, mainly Santo



# The Maewo second home scheme

Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office



Devised by Council of Chiefs

## MAEWO RESPONSE & RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

### AMBAE VOLCANO

Short Term (September – November 2018)

Intermediate (Dec 2018 – May 2019)

Long Term (July 2019/2020)

Map of proposed sites on Maewo





# RELOCATION TO MAEWO

*What happens if we stay? What happens if we go?*

## STAY ON AMBAE

### *Relocation is voluntary*

You are free to choose to stay on Ambae—all relocation will be completely voluntary.

### *Relocation support will end*

Emergency support will continue until the government assisted relocation period concludes. This is currently scheduled for 30 July 2018. After this period the Government will no longer provide relocation assistance.

### *Government Emergency support will conclude after 30 July 2018*

Government emergency support at existing evacuation centres will cease after 30 July 2018. If volcanic activity increases in the future the Government may not be able to provide you similar assistance. You will be expected to make your own way to your government allocated second home provided on Maewo or to any other location.

### *Government Services will continue*

Government service delivery will continue on Ambae however this may be at a reduced level .

## MOVE TO MAEWO (2nd home)

### *Support will be provided*

If you choose to relocate to Maewo before 30 July, you will receive transport and access to land, shelter/building supplies and food and water support until 31 December 2018.

### *Government will provide transport*

The Government will transport you, your family and your belongings to your 2nd home on Maewo

### *You will keep your land on Ambae*

You are able to relocate to your 2nd home on Maewo and still keep your land on Ambae. However, travel between the islands and maintenance of your land will be your responsibility.

### *Your second home on Maewo*

You will be given access to land on Maewo.

### *Services will increase*

Services like health clinics and schools will be limited when you first arrive on Maewo, but the Government will invest in increasing these services in the future.

# MARN-funded research project:

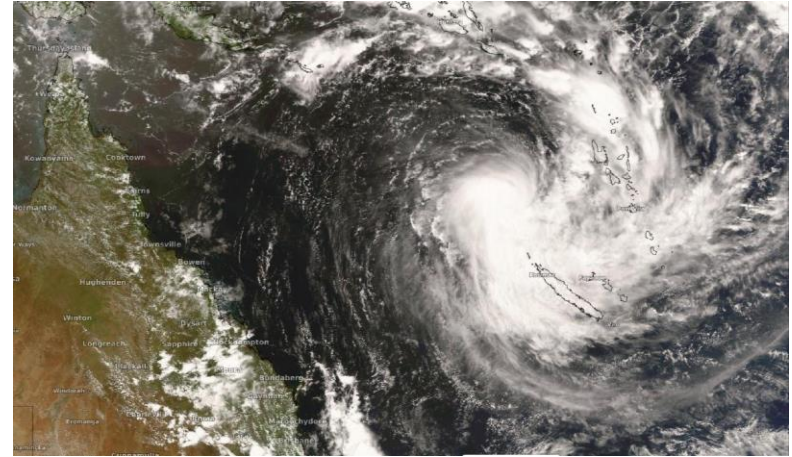
- Funded by MARN agencies (MFAT, Immigration, NZDF, Massey Centre for Defence and Security Studies etc)
- Aim: to learn lessons from the large-scale forced migrations of Ambae residents in 2017/8, to inform policy advice for Aotearoa NZ agencies.
- To compare outcomes for people who took up the official 'second home' scheme on Maewo versus those who moved unofficially to other islands (mainly Santo) during the second evacuation.
- Study aims had to be modified..





# Field work, 8-19 Feb 2020

- Planned to visit Santo and Ambae
- Ambae flight cancelled and not rescheduled
- Carried out 42 interviews with Ambae evacuees in communities on Santo, using semi-structured interviews based on UN guiding principles on research on IDPs



**Tropical cyclone Uesi, 10 Feb 2020**







# Key finding 1: Evacuation planning needs to take people's preferences into account and offer options

## Interviewees chose to go to Santo as:

- Santo larger, more opportunities and scope to buy land
- Closer ties between West Ambae and Santo: *“More easy for us to move to Santo because our grandfathers and fathers have built up this bridge before”*. Interviewee 5.
- Concerns about different Kastom on Maewo
- Perceived as being safer from volcanic emissions (upwind)
- Suspicion about Maewo second home scheme and whether the resources promised would materialise:
- *“The supply, everything goes to Maewo and people here really struggle”* Interviewee 19.

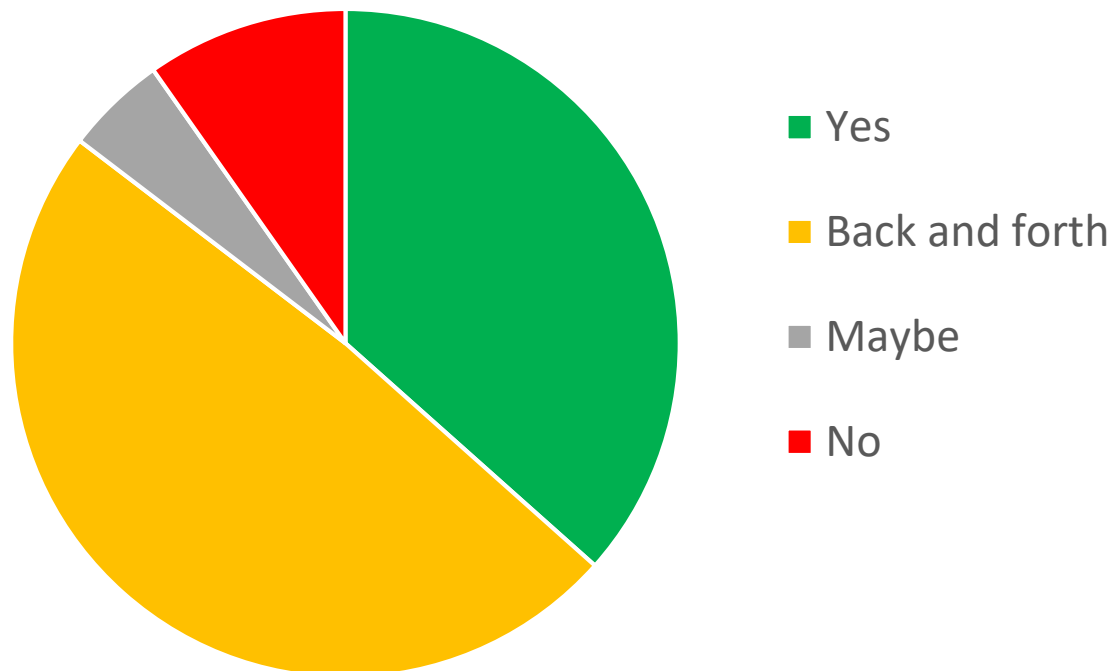
## Key finding 2: A strong pull home to Ambae (needs to be planned for)



Manaro St, Santo



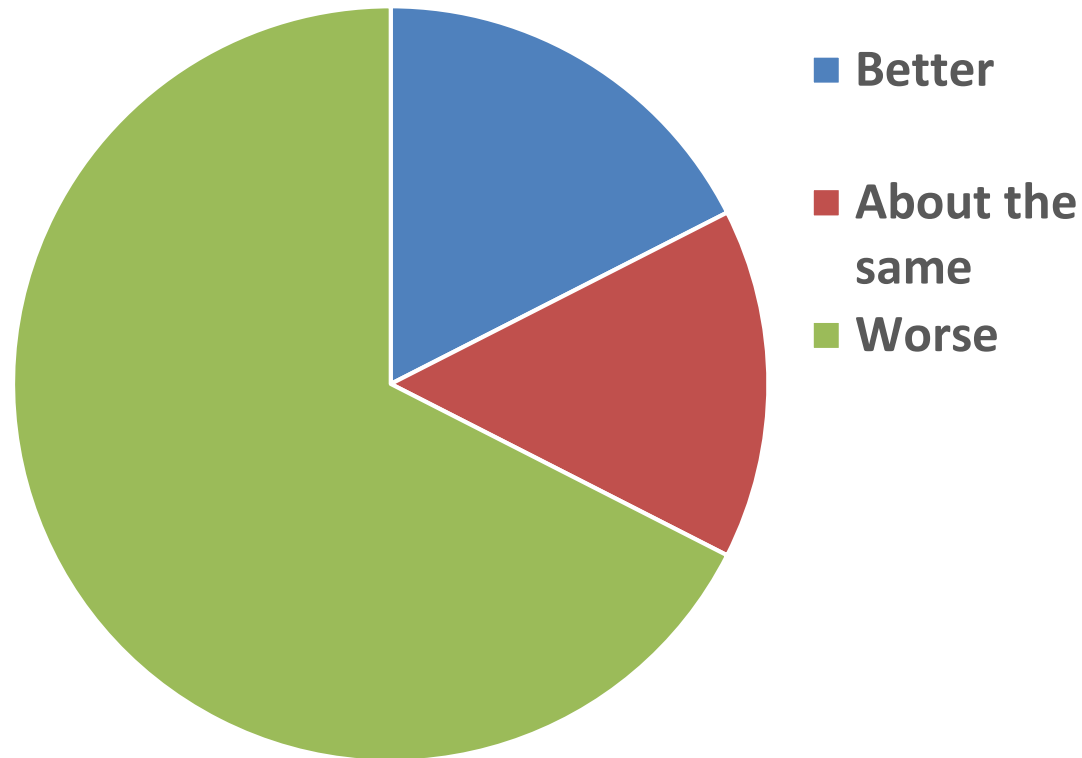
# Did interviewees intend to return to Ambae?



*“Ambae much better because it’s our inherited home island and everything is there”, Interviewee 21.*

*“We follow the advice of the government to build a second home so anything happen we have a second home”, Interviewee 5.*

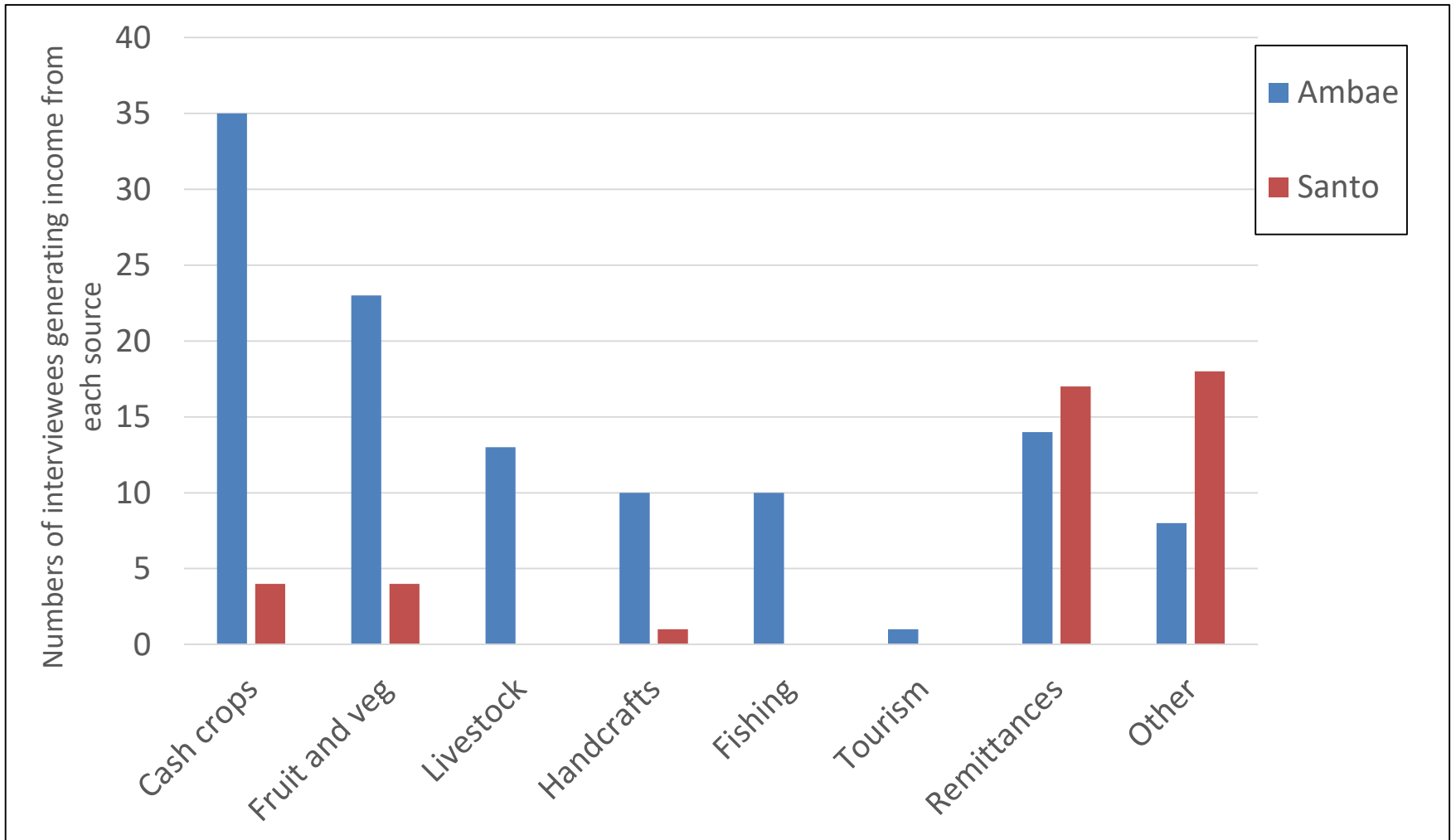
# Responses to interview question: Is your standard of living better, about the same or worse on Santo compared to Ambae?



*"In Santo it's very hard as everything is money .. we just pay everything".*  
Interviewee 28



# Interviewees' main sources of income on Ambae and Santo



## Key finding 3: Better material and social outcomes for communities who evacuated together



Communal water tank for Lovanliko community, Ambae, on Santo



## **Key finding 3: Better material and social outcomes for communities who evacuated together**

- Contributes to people feeling safe in a new environment and reducing post-disaster distress
- Community members can pool resources
- Social capital preserved

*“The community needs the family and the family needs the community in order to survive”,*  
Interviewee 23.

## Key finding 4: NZ-funded Cash Transfer Programme empowered evacuees to meet their own needs as they best saw fit





Vanuatu Cash Transfer Feasibility Assessment Report, Oxfam, Feb 2019







# Key finding 5: The NZ Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme substantially improved living conditions for some evacuees



# Overall lessons for large-scale population displacements

Where possible, evacuate the community together and resettle them together in the new location.

RSE and cash transfer schemes very effective form of aid

Consider people's needs and preferences in evacuation planning and provide options

Proactively involve community in planning beforehand



A photograph of a rural scene. In the background, there is a simple wooden house with a corrugated metal roof. The house is surrounded by lush greenery, including several large banana trees with broad leaves. In the foreground, there is a dirt path leading towards the house, flanked by rows of green plants, possibly corn or similar crops. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny, suggesting a rural or agricultural setting.

**Thank you for listening!**  
**Comments and questions welcome at:**

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