



REPUBLIC OF VANUATU/RÉPUBLIQUE DE VANUATU

VANUATU METEOROLOGY AND GEO-HAZARDS DEPARTMENT
DÉPARTEMENT DE LA MÉTÉOROLOGIE ET DES GÉORISQUES DE VANUATU

Phone: (678) 24686, 22932 VOIP: 5305 Fax: (678) 22310
Email: admin@meteo.gov.vu Website: www.meteo.gov.vu
Address: PMB 9054, Lini Highway, Port Vila, Vanuatu



(Address correspondence to Director)
(Toute correspondance doit être envoyée au Directeur)

Our Ref: PVI/MET-GEO/

MEDIA RELEASE, Friday, 15th May 2015 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prepare Vanuatu: El Niño has arrived

The Climate Division of the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department (VMGD) with scientific partners, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, the New Zealand National Institute of Water Atmospheric Research (NIWA) and the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have confirmed it: **an El Niño event is now here (or simply: El Niño is here)**. "El Niño is a temporary shift in the weather patterns across the Pacific and the globe, driven by temperature changes in the ocean" said Climate Manager *Philip Malsale* from the *Climate Division – Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department*. "It can lead to changes in seasonal temperature, rainfall, and even the number and severity of cyclones which hit our region" he added. "At this stage, it is too early to determine the strength of this El Niño event, but we're expecting to see some significant impacts regardless of the strength".

El Niño in Vanuatu is often, but not always associated with drought or lower than normal rainfall. It can bring a late start to the wet season and lower rainfall in both the wet (November to April) and dry seasons (May to October). El Niño in Vanuatu is associated with freshwater shortages in islands with no major water sources, such as small islands in the Shepherd group, Aniwa and Ambae, as well in other bigger islands, particularly on their western side. Water shortage occurs as a result of movement of a large group of clouds known as *Klaod Nasara* to the eastern Pacific region and away from Vanuatu. El Niño events often affect the agriculture and hydrology sectors, in turn affecting the socio-economic livelihoods of the people of Vanuatu. El Niño can also cause higher than normal day time temperatures with less cloud cover and is associated with cold nights across Vanuatu, conditions which are related to various health issues.

People are advised that the strength of an El Niño event does not always indicate how much it will influence Vanuatu's rainfall. Historically there are examples where weak events have resulted in widespread drought across large parts of Vanuatu, while at other times strong events have resulted in relatively modest impacts. .

Now that the VMGD confirms that El Niño thresholds have been reached, and that this El Niño event will continue, and possibly intensify throughout 2015. Ocean temperatures have risen rapidly in the last few weeks; and are more than 1°C warmer than normal right across the key El Niño areas - a combination that has not been seen since the very strong El Niño event of 1997.

(To contact VMGD Divisions directly)

Observations:	Ph: 22433 Email: observers@meteo.gov.vu	Climate :	Ph: 23866 Email: climate@meteo.gov.vu
Forecast:	Ph: 22932 Email: forecast@meteo.gov.vu	Geo-Hazards :	Ph: 24686 Email: geohazards@meteo.gov.vu
Climate Change:	Ph: 22331 Email: pccap@vanuatu.com.vu	ICT and Engineering :	Ph: 24686 Email: helpdesk@meteo.gov.vu

The Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department wishes to inform the general public that with the possibility of lower than normal rainfall predicted for at least the next three months, an El Niño event occurring, and the ongoing impacts of Tropical Cyclone Pam, climate sensitive sectors must start making immediate preparations and be proactive in adaptation strategies. Following Tropical Cyclone Pam, communities have started replanting root crops and vegetables. It is important that the crops planted are resilient to low rainfall and are planted using farming techniques that withstand the impacts of drought. There are also many activities that people can undertake to minimize drought impacts, with a particular focus on using water wisely as it is a very important resource. For more information on El Nino adaptation strategies, the public is advised to consult the VMGD's ENSO Handbook publication, watch the Klaod Nasara DVD, or contact the climate officers at VMGD, the Department of Agriculture and SPC/GIZ.

The Department, alongside its partners including the Climate and Ocean Support Program in the Pacific (COSPPac), implemented by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology and the National Institute of Water Atmospheric Research (NIWA) in New Zealand, will continue to carefully monitor the El Niño situation. More detailed interpretations of regional climate fluctuations will be generated monthly by the Climate Division.

Information will be made available through our website (www.meteo.gov.vu) and widely circulated through the monthly *Vanuatu Climate Update* bulletin. To obtain further information, request copies of the Vanuatu Climate Update, find online copies of ENSO Handbook and Klaod Nasara DVD, or for specific planning advice, please contact the Climate Division of Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department or related departments.

For further guidance please contact:

David GIBSON, Director, Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-Hazards Department (VMGD),
Telephone 24686, Email: dgibson@meteo.gov.vu

Philip Malsale, Manager, Climate Division (VMGD), Telephone: 24686, Email:
malsale@meteo.gov.vu

END RELEASE

(To contact VMGD Divisions directly)

Observations:	Ph: 22433 Email: observers@meteo.gov.vu	Climate :	Ph: 23866 Email: climate@meteo.gov.vu
Forecast:	Ph: 22932 Email: forecast@meteo.gov.vu	Geo-Hazards :	Ph: 24686 Email: geohazards@meteo.gov.vu
Climate Change:	Ph: 22331 Email: piccap@vanuatu.com.vu	ICT and Engineering :	Ph: 24686 Email: helpdesk@meteo.gov.vu