



Nambawan!
Global Mission's
Vanuatu Newsletter



GlobalMission
Vanuatu

April 2021

Tradesmen and volunteers repair a roof at Talua Theological Training Institute against the backdrop of Vanuatu's deep blue sky.



It has now been a year since two major events combined to have a massive impact on our Global Mission partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV). First of all Covid-19 arrived, causing a disruption to all our shared programmes, with mission partners returning home and all projects postponed or cancelled. Then on April 6th Cyclone Harold arrived with Category 5 force, wreaking havoc across the northern islands of Vanuatu, and gradually reports began to come in of significant damage to PCV properties across a wide area. The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand immediately sent relief aid and launched a Moderator's Appeal to raise funds in support of Vanuatu's recovery. Covid-19 and Cyclone Harold have significantly affected life in Vanuatu, causing extensive disruption throughout the country, and the tourist-based economy has taken a massive hit. The photograph above tells the story of a familiar theme over the past few months, with hundreds of roofs needing to be replaced after the cyclone. PCANZ's support has helped to make a positive difference in this recovery effort. Much has been achieved but there is still much to be done. Read inside to check on progress and see where our appeal funds have gone.

Pastor Fiamia Rakau

The PCV's Pastor Fiamia Rakau died suddenly on September 26 2020, causing shock and grief to all who knew him both within Vanuatu and worldwide. As this is the first newsletter since he died, it is important to note his passing in this edition of Nambawan. Rev. Randall Prior of the Uniting Church in Australia was very close to Pastor Fiamia and wrote this brief obituary:

Fiamia has been one of the most prominent and influential leaders of the PCV over almost four decades. Following his degree studies in Theology at the PTC in Suva, he was inducted into ministry in the parish in Port Vila in 1983. In 1985 he was appointed as Principal of Aulua Theological College. Under his leadership, Aulua developed into the newly established Talua Ministry Training Centre which was officially opened in 1988. Fiamia remained Principal of Talua for a number of years before later being appointed as the Clerk of the General Assembly, a position he held for 12 years. He then returned as Principal at Talua until his retirement in 2016.

*He was a pioneer in two key areas: **Gospel and Culture** - he was co-founder of the Gospel and Culture in Vanuatu movement, and **Gender Studies**. He was a leading advocate in the church/nation for Gender equality and under his leadership at Talua, numerous young women were encouraged to take up theological studies, leading to ordination. After his formal retirement from Talua, he was then employed and funded by World Vision as a Gender Educator.*

His sudden death on September 26th is a huge blow for the PCV and the nation. He was 70 years of age.

A formal letter of condolence from PCANZ Moderator the Right Reverend Fakaofu Kaio was sent to the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. Global Mission gives thanks for the life, leadership, witness and friendship of Pastor Fiamia Rakau.



New Principal of Onesua College

Onesua Presbyterian College has a new principal. Mrs. Rosie Caleb, a long-serving member of staff and former deputy principal, was appointed to the position of Principal at the beginning of this year. We wish Rosie well as she takes on the mantle of leadership at Onesua, which has produced many of Vanuatu's national leaders since it was established in 1953. Onesua's first principal was Ian Gray of New Zealand, and many New Zealand teachers and tradespeople have served at Onesua over a long period of time. Rosie replaced Graham Kalmar who had been Principal for several years. Rosie is on the left of this photo with Deputy Academic Principal Adrian Tari on the right.

Read about it online in the Vanuatu Daily post, <https://bit.ly/2QQqpEE>.



Tata Presbyterian School Rebuilding Programme

Tata Presbyterian School on Santo suffered major damage in Cyclone Harold and has begun a rebuilding programme. This is the school where Rev. Carl Nial serves as chaplain – he attended the chaplains conference in Auckland in 2019. Carl's was one of two staff houses destroyed in the cyclone. Global Mission has committed to supporting this rebuild, with \$7,000 already sent for one staff house. The Village Church in Christchurch has agreed to raise funds to rebuild the administration block. This will be an ongoing project so further donations are welcomed. Global Mission Director Phil King can supply more information.

Distribution of Cyclone Harold Appeal Funds

Cyclone Harold hit Vanuatu in April last year causing extensive damage to Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu property. The PCANZ launched a Moderator's Appeal and donations from members and congregations reached \$90,000 by the end of 2020. The PCV designated our funds to be targeted towards Presbyteries in the regions that suffered the most damage; Espiritu Santo (Santo and Laurua Presbyteries), Ambrym and North Malekula. Our funds have also supported the PWMU (women's ministries) and the Bush Mission outreach on Espiritu Santo. Funds have been distributed as below:

Cyclone Harold Donations and Rebuilding Programme

Donations received: \$90,000

Distribution:

Santo Presbytery	\$12,600
Laurua Presbytery (also on Santo island)	\$ 8,700
Ambrym Presbytery	\$ 9,900
North Malekula Presbytery	\$ 6,200
PWMU	\$11,000
Tata School	\$ 7,000
Bush Mission	<u>\$ 8,000</u>
Total so far:	\$63,400

Funds remaining: \$26,600

(These remaining funds will be distributed throughout 2021)

Non-Cyclone Harold Appeal Funds

Talua emergency grant	\$ 5,000
PCV Relief fund	\$ 5,000
PCV office roof repair	\$16,400
Williams Bay manse, Erromango*	\$ 2,200

**A donation from a Presbyterian congregation in Canada*



Members of Santo Presbytery on the roof of the damaged Presbytery office building in Luganville. The office was rebuilt with PCANZ appeal funds.

Repair of PCV General Assembly Office Roof

Anyone who has visited the PCV Assembly Office in Port Vila will be pleased to know that PCANZ contributed to the re-roofing of the building in December last year. Although this was not damaged in the cyclone, it was long past overdue and ensures the roof will be strong enough to withstand any future cyclones. PCVEA Education Secretary Jonathan Tarip was in poetical and reminiscent mode when the repairs began, and penned this lyrical reflection:

Memories of PCV Assembly Office

The building that housed the PCNH (*Presbyterian Church of the New Hebrides*) and now PCV

The building that minuted some prophetic decisions leading to political independence

The building that assisted to build spiritual leaders who helped to promote peace and harmony

The building that survived many cyclones before and after independence

The building that survived two category 5 cyclones

An historical building will now come under major

repair by Shem Construction company

To be funded by PCANZ.



Rebuilding Talua Theological Training Institute

Talua was badly hit by Cyclone Harold with classes suspended for a year so repair work could be completed. Funds sent from PCANZ were allocated to the re-roofing of the single female students dorm (on the right, prior to being repaired). Australian staff member Tom Richards sent these photos and gave a brief update (*Tom serves at Talua with Australian Presbyterian World Mission*).

“The rebuild is going well. It took a bit of time to find our feet and get going, but we are making good progress now. We have finished the student accommodation (except in the mission village) and the staff duplex will be finished by the end of the week. The triplex will be finished by the end of the month. The canteen and the classrooms have an expected completion date of the end of April, and the staff duplex my family and I live in should be done by the end of May. “



Staff, students and volunteers from several Presbyteries have all contributed to the labour in the building programme. On the left, a new roof is being constructed on a staff duplex, the canteen is getting a new roof below left; and below right we can see the completed single female students dormitory funded by PCANZ, along with other student housing in the background. A great job has been done.





Bush Mission Dispensary

Santo Bush Mission recently completed the rebuild of a medical dispensary in Sele village, in the Middle Bush area of Santo. After the devastation caused by Cyclone Harold, it's encouraging to see the Bush Mission recovering and moving forward with their support to this area. There are 30 villages in Middle Bush within 1-2 days walk of Sele. The dispensary is staffed by registered nurse Fiona (pictured).



Help is at hand

These photos (left) illustrate two things: the challenge of building projects in Vanuatu with a lack of infrastructure; and the willingness of the entire community even small children, to lend a hand. This timber for the new Brenwei Presbyterian Church on Malekula was unloaded directly on to the shore and carried by hand over undeveloped tracks to the building site.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON RSE WORKERS FROM VANUATU

Each year, around 5000 workers from Vanuatu come to New Zealand as part of the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) programme. The numbers have been growing steadily since it first began in 2007. The arrangement, which involves the New Zealand Government in partnership with Pacific Island nations, has become a valued part of the economy of both New Zealand and Vanuatu. New Zealand employers in the agriculture and viticulture industries depend on it for the successful harvesting of their seasonal crops, and Vanuatu depends on the multiple benefits that it produces. Remittances from the workers not only provide essential support for their daily family needs (food, health, education, transport) and more substantial family goals (land purchase, home-building, business projects), they also assist significantly in the development of local village life (agricultural projects, water supply, goods and services), and contribute substantially to the national GDP (measured now to be around 8%).

The World Bank has just concluded a major survey of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the RSE programme. The purpose was to measure what financial effect has been caused by the virus. The interim results show that two-thirds of the workers suffered a loss of income in the first three months following the closure of borders, with one-third of the workers experiencing at least one week of no employment. The average drop in workers' nett weekly income was 47% (\$364). The most severely affected were those who consider that their season's income won't be enough to cover their initial costs in coming. In contrast, 16% worked longer hours and enjoyed higher income. The variation across the workers was influenced largely by the timing of the harvest; for some workers the lock-down came toward the end of the harvest season, and for others it came at the beginning.

Predictably, the drop in income experienced by the workers led to a drop in the amount of money sent back to their families and home communities. However, this was not as dramatic as expected. What seems to have happened is that many of the workers spent less on themselves so that they could send as much as possible back to their families. This aligns with the fact that Vanuatu families were experiencing their own Covid-related loss of income and were relying even more on the income from RSE workers.

What the World Bank survey has done is to quantify the financial impact of the pandemic on the seasonal workers. What it has not done is to name the many and diverse non-financial effects of the pandemic. The financial impact of the pandemic was in fact secondary to the emotional and psychological impact. For the workers, the closure of the borders prompted uncertainty about employment security, concern about not being able to provide support for their families, and a sense of being cut off from their homeland with no clarity about returning home. Where a crisis, tragedy or celebratory event was experienced in the worker's family, these impacts were more severe. For the Vanuatu families, the border closures generated corresponding anxieties, together with fear that the worker may catch the dreaded virus.

One hidden but significant factor is the role of church communities and the support they provide for RSE workers in their locality. Vanuatu workers, while on the RSE programme, value highly their connection with a church community where they can worship regularly and receive pastoral support. During the pandemic, this has been even more important.

Randall Prior is a Uniting Church Minister in Australia. He interviewed Vanuatu workers for the World Bank Survey. This can be read on documents.worldbank.org (search "Pacific Labour Mobility, Migration and Remittances in Times of Covid-19")

Neville and Gloria Jones are key figures in the pastoral support of RSE workers who attend St. Ninian's Church in Blenheim.



Phil King recently spoke at St. Ninian's Church in Blenheim and met up with several Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers who worship there. Due to Covid-19, most of them have been here for a long time, away from their families and communities. Some were about to be transferred to other regions for work. They greatly appreciate the support of their church in Blenheim.

Nambawan! is dedicated to the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand's partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. "Nambawan" is Bislama (one of the three official languages of Vanuatu) and means "Number One" or as we might say today, "Awesome!" If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter or would prefer email, please advise by return mail to Global Mission, P.O. Box 9049 Wellington 6141, or email Phil King at phil@presbyterian.org.nz.