

Disasters are never invited, but all too readily exploited...

And... Why do we continue to miss opportunities for building resilience in post-disaster recovery?



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Michael Bonte-Grapentin – SOPAC (now World Bank), Suva, Fiji

Four SW-Pacific illustrative cases:

1. Chronic environmental health issue in Vanuatu – attention via “disaster”, quick-“fix” response
2. Community emergency management in Vanuatu – local promise, outsider interference
3. Cyclone reconstruction in Niue – perhaps we are learning from our mistakes and tradition?
4. Tsunami reconstruction in the Solomon Islands – or perhaps we are not?



We must integrate disaster management response and recovery more closely with carefully considered sustainable development planning...





Ambrym Island: big eruptions
bring media, government and
donor attention (e.g. 2005)

Results in food aid

If eruptions are small,
health/crop disasters can be
helped along... (2009)

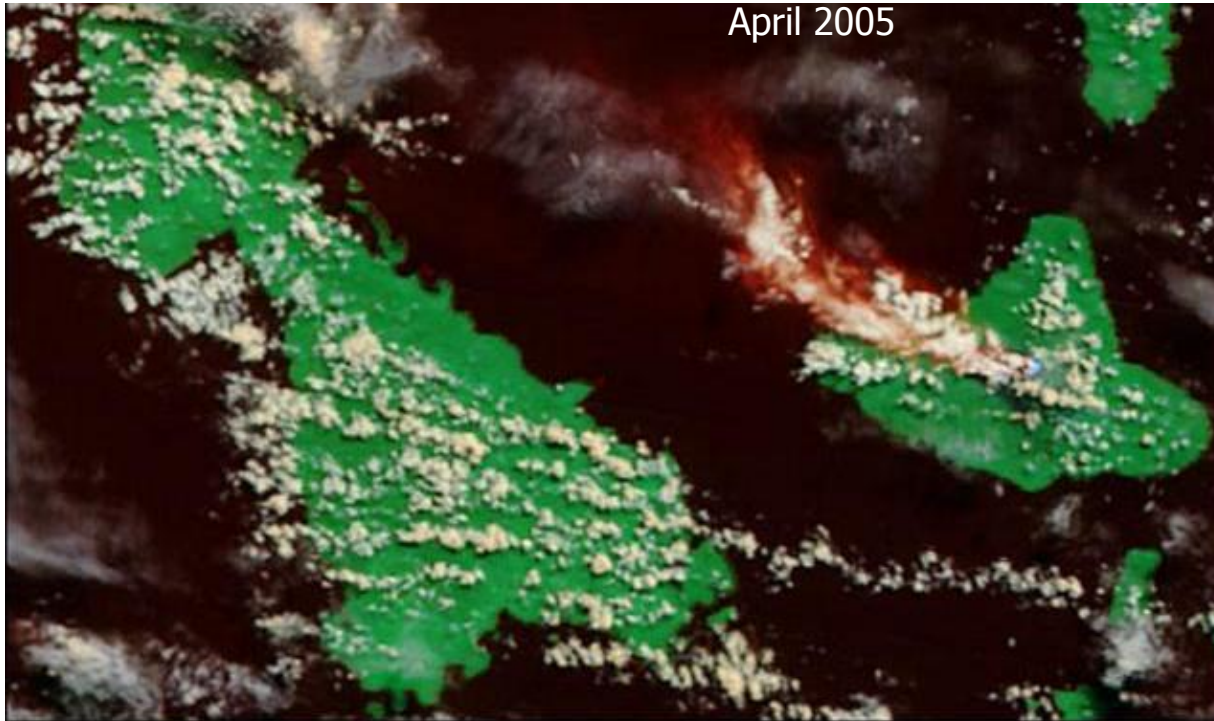
Results in food aid

But, during
“normal” times,
permanent health
problems persist
for the 10,000+
inhabitants



- 4-6 mths in duration, 10x normal gas outputs
- Impact west Ambrym and Malekula Island
- Acid rain, ash-fall and aerosol deposition
- Food supplies destroyed and water causes illness

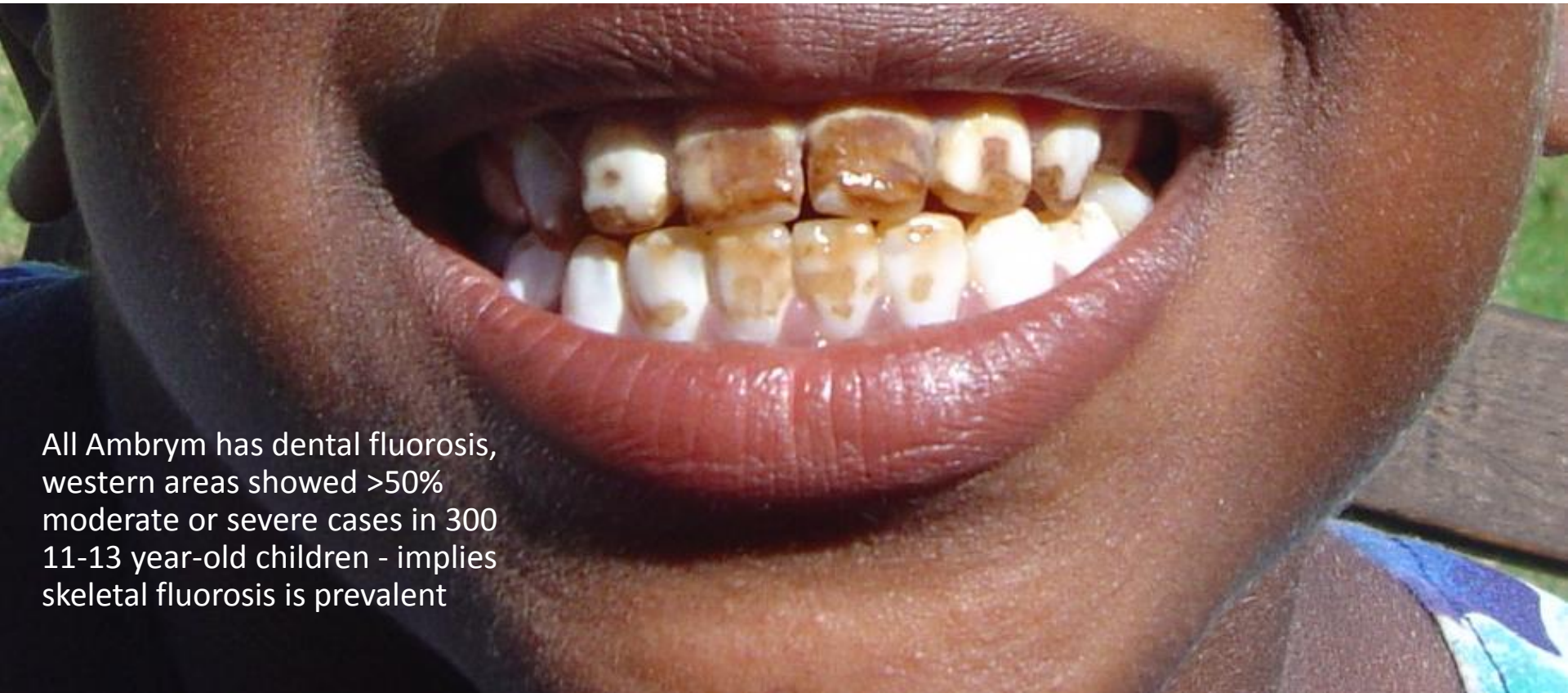
April 2005



Terra MODIS, Bands 3,6,7 (479 nm; 1,652 nm; 2,155 nm)

Relief responses appropriate or at times under-fit





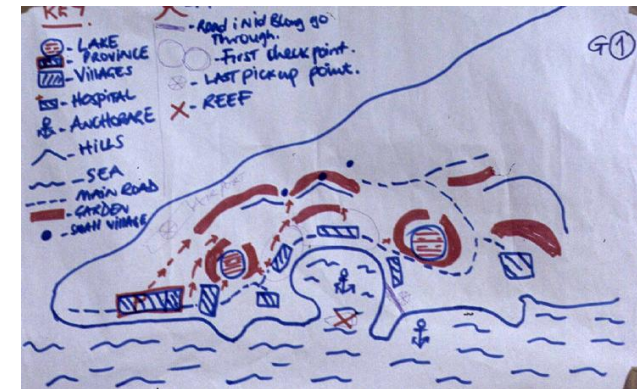
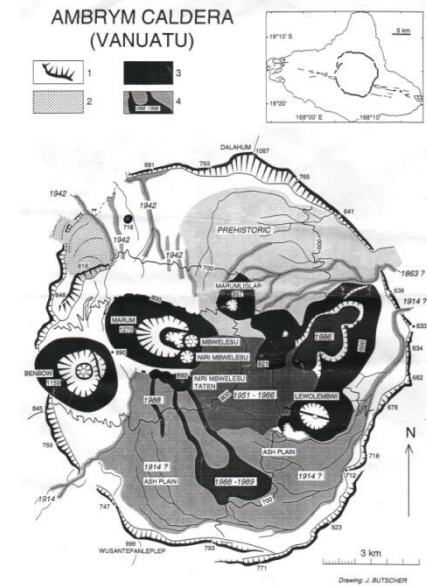
All Ambrym has dental fluorosis,
western areas showed >50%
moderate or severe cases in 300
11-13 year-old children - implies
skeletal fluorosis is prevalent

Identified 1999 (WHO), confirmed 2001 (WHO, UNDP), WHO recovery project scuppered 2003 (SARS)
2004-6, fluorosis levels quantified, roof-fed water identified as culprit, solutions recommended
Major gas crisis 2005 – Relief efforts, FRANZ, UNDP - community hazard identification, scientific studies,
UNESCO - community emergency management
2009 – a crisis “invented”, followed by 6! International surveys, and another WHO consultancy

Recommendations remain unfulfilled, issue remains a tragedy

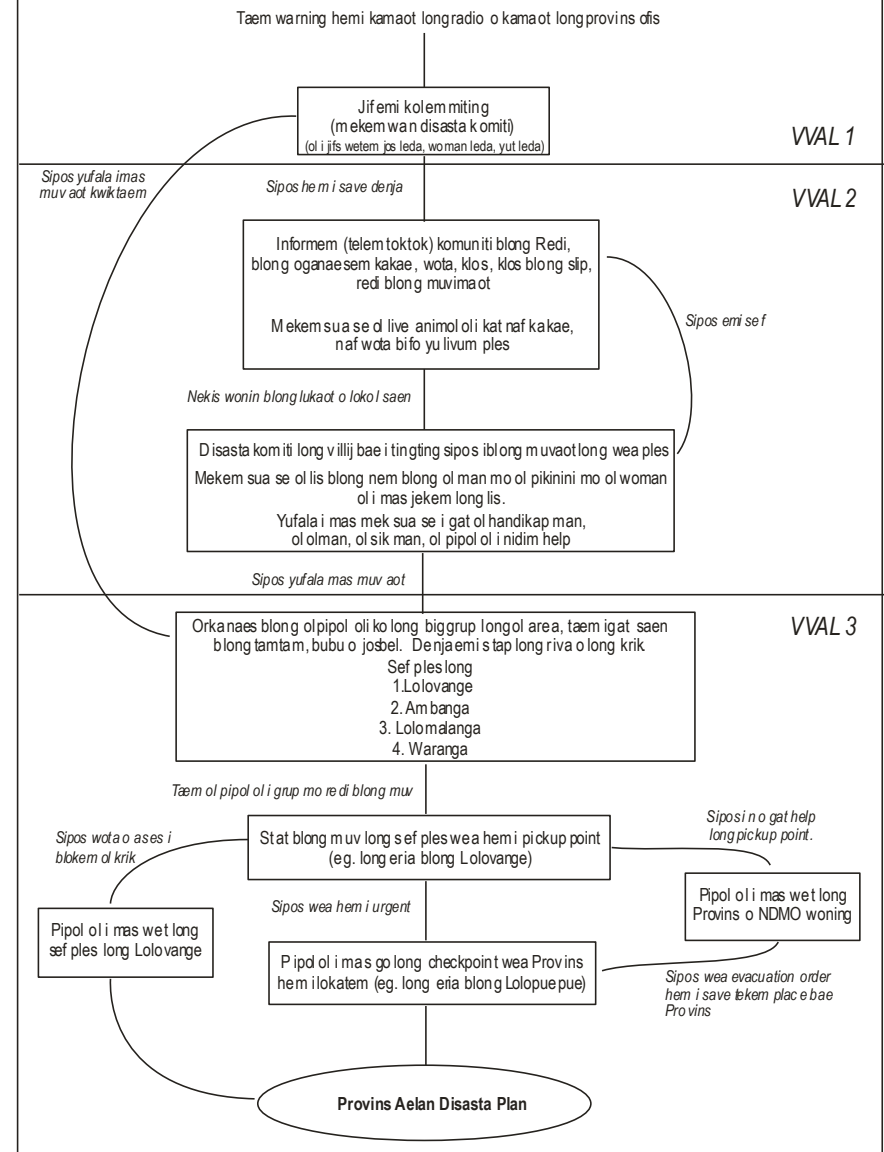


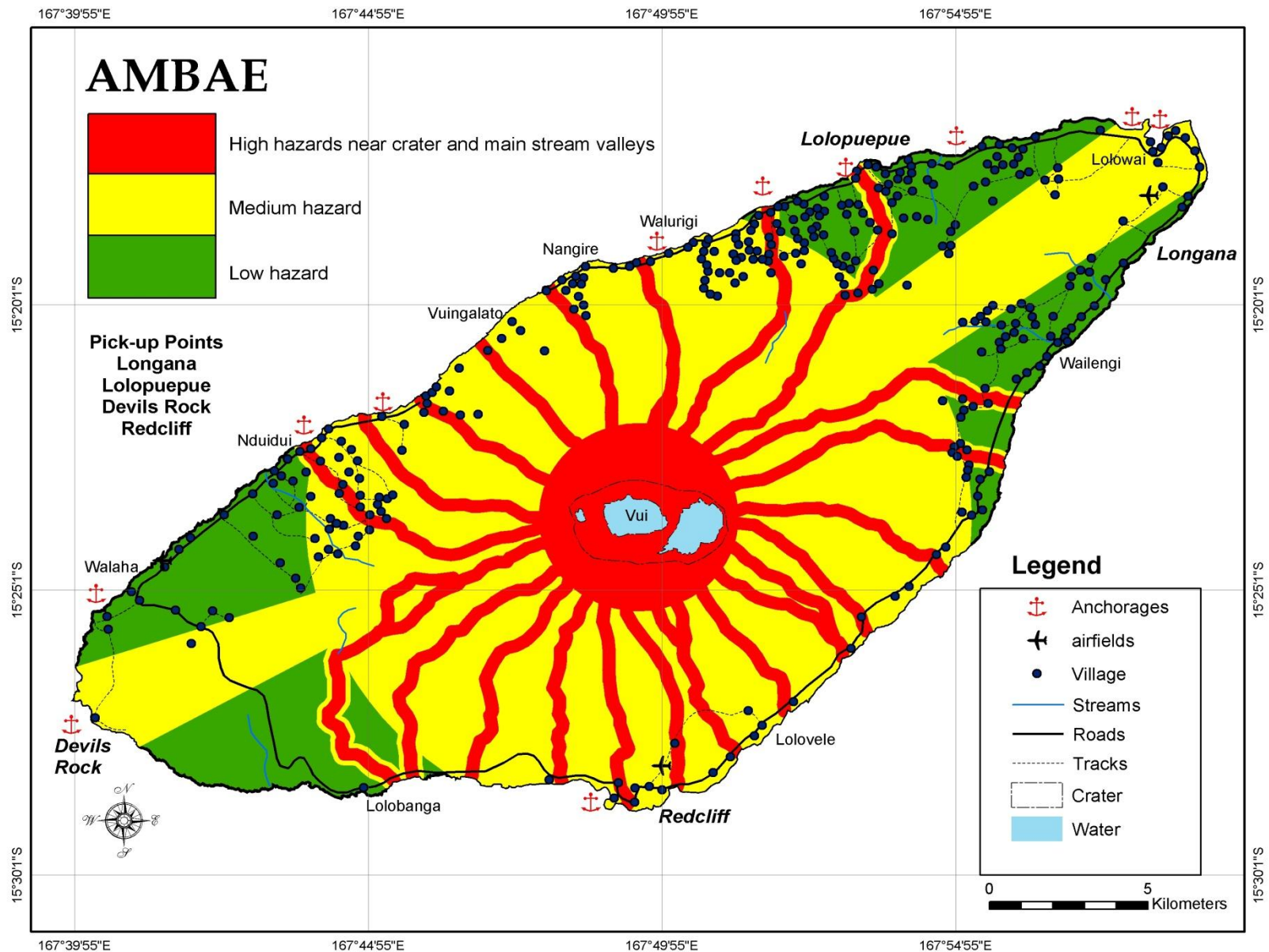
- **Community level (UNESCO Office for the Pacific)**
 - Integration of traditional and scientific perspectives
 - Emergency plans, locally derived and owned
- **Province level (NZAid)**
 - Province volcanic risk management strategies
 - Emergency plans, island based
 - Coordination with communities
 - Intergration of hazard management within REDI exercises
- **National level (NZAid/SOPAC)**
 - Integration of hazard management in developmental planning process
 - Science communications standardisation
 - Volcanic alert level system (VAL)
 - SOPs to support VAL
 - Public/user consultation on VAL
 - Hazard mapping norms, keyed to VAL
 - Keying into national school curricula





Draft volcano disaster plan along the coast of Lolovange, Ambae, 11 April 2001





27 Nov 2005 – 10 Jan 2006, Ambae

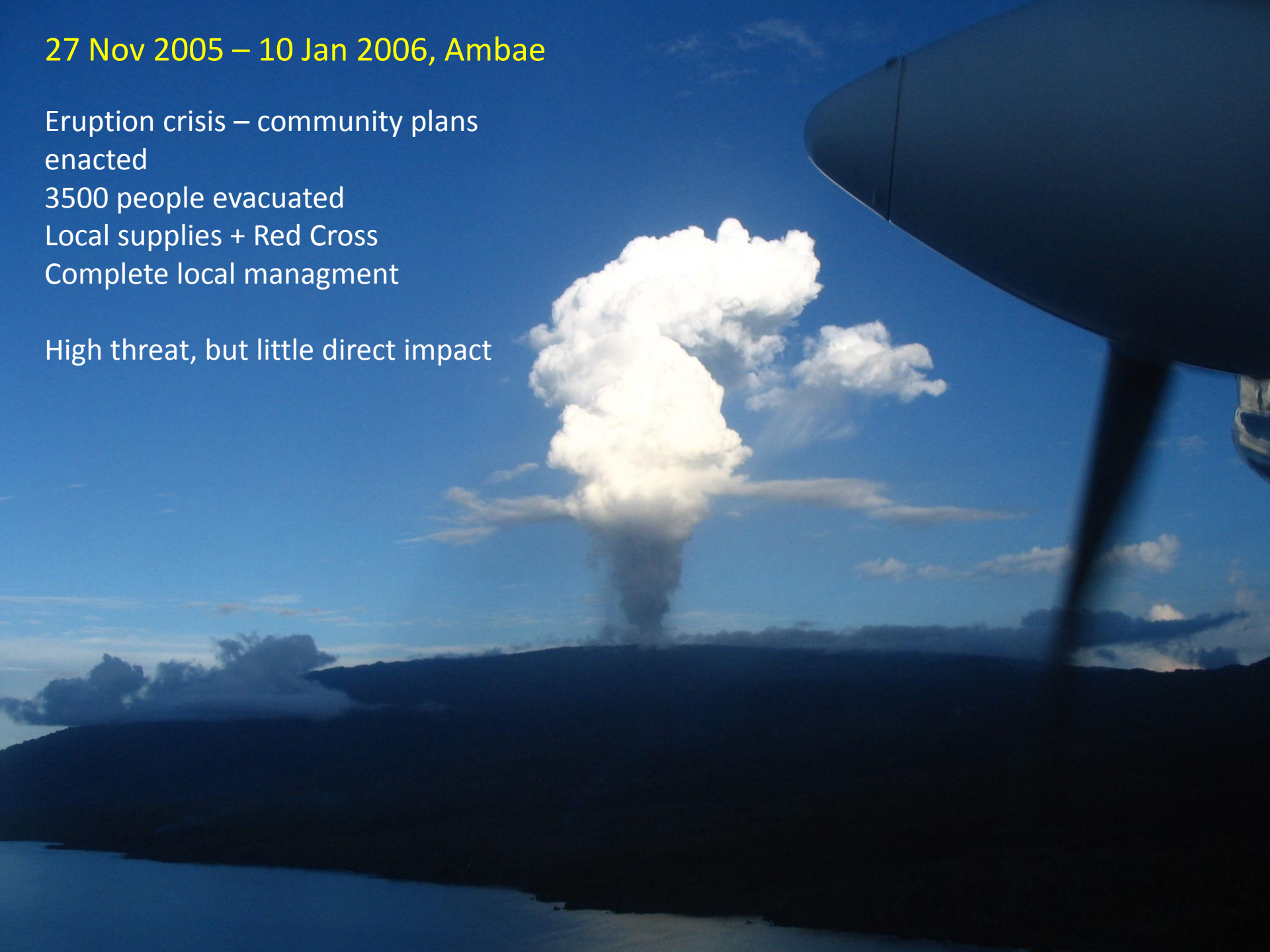
Eruption crisis – community plans
enacted

3500 people evacuated

Local supplies + Red Cross

Complete local management

High threat, but little direct impact



NDMO

Pushed for early repatriation of evacuees and a smaller response

Donors

Wanted to urgently respond with aid and at times circumvented process

Media

Built hype around essentially small eruptions

Funding

Politically-blackmailed Government funds for response amounted to \$US435,000

Local response cost of the total operation was only \$US64,000!

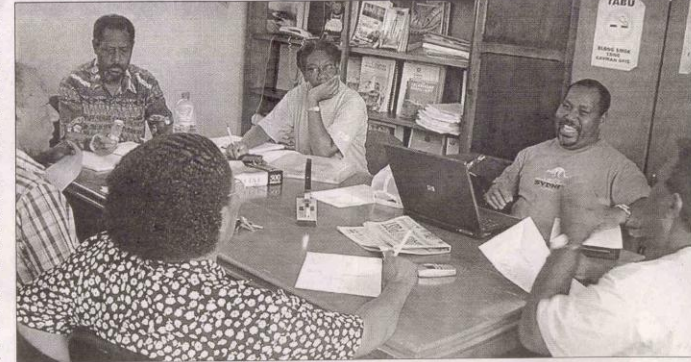
Disaster committee drives ahead of Govt

By Len Garae

MOVING THOUSANDS OF people from one place to another is an expensive exercise as both Penama Province and the Central Government are about to find out in the coming days as the costs of keeping the villagers from their native homes climb and hunger seeps in.

The Chairman of the Port Vila Manaro Disaster Committee, Jean Sese said his committee has drawn up a budget estimate for one month totalling 30 million vatu.

The one-month budget is to be used to buy food, meat, water, tents, blankets, torches, lamps, fuel and medicine and other essential items for the victims. "We are not waiting for the Government to



Disaster Committee high-level meeting to draw up budget estimate



Built on Alofi terrace, only 20-25 m asl. – against traditional advice (they lived on higher terrace)
Niue Government requested its relocation – but it was rebuilt in same location by aid assistance

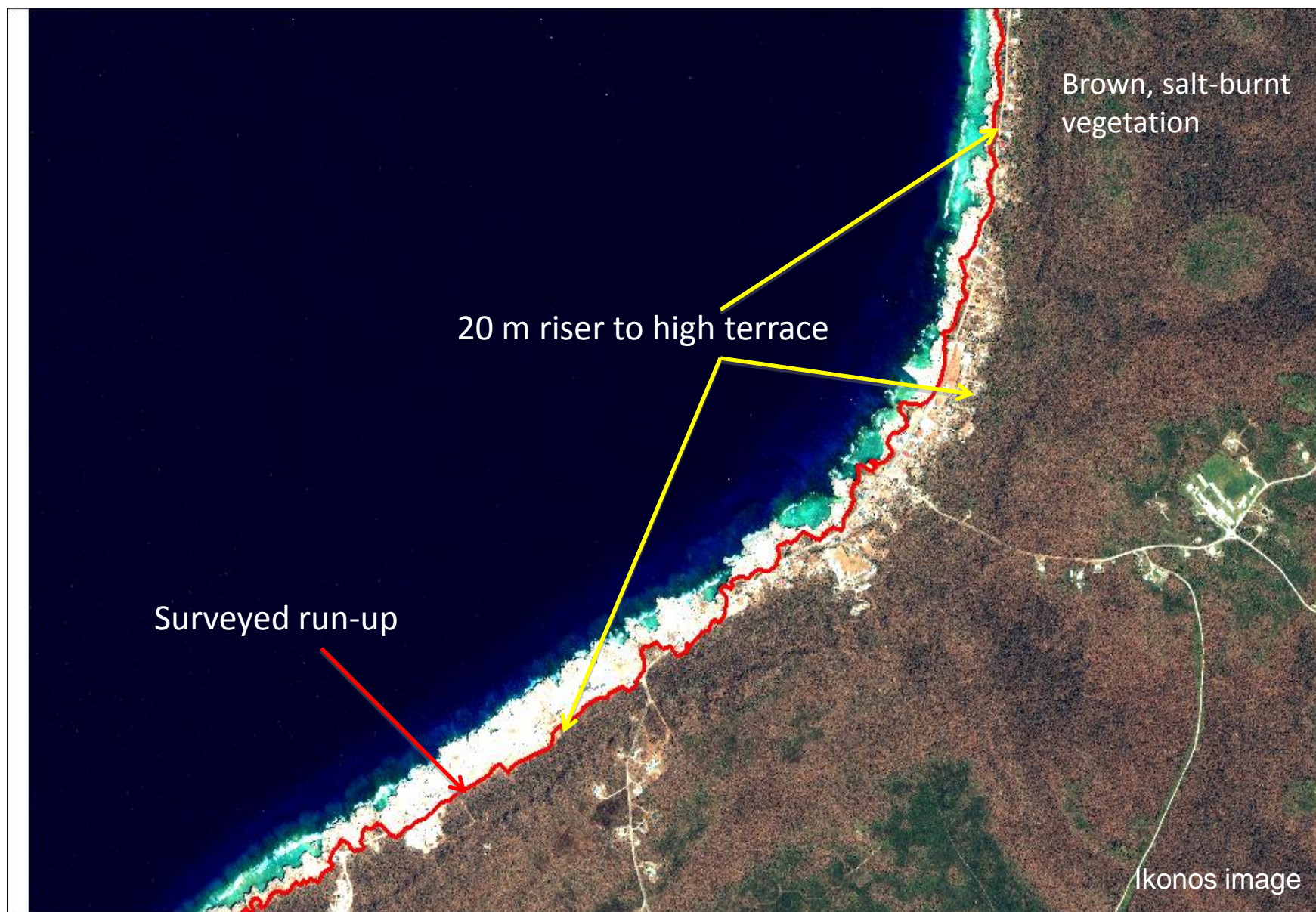


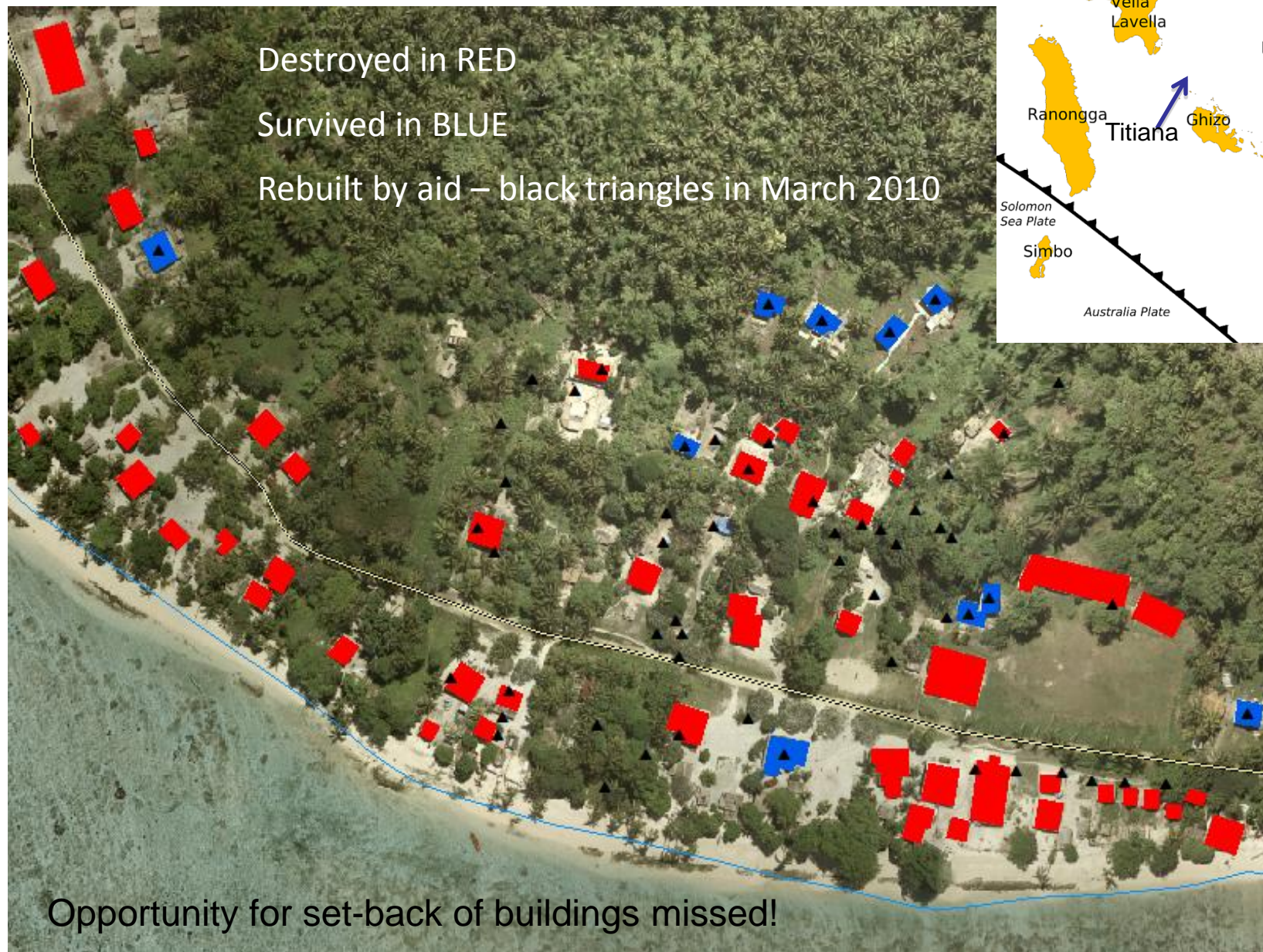
Déjà vu... the mildest of several appropriate French expressions)

Redevelopment is now on the high terrace



Courtesy Royal NZ Air Force







When will we learn?

NZAid, EU, UNICEF, Oxfam all supported this...



Disaster response - a flagship of donor responsibility – eager to help (and be seen helping)

- *May induce short term “simple” relief*
- *More difficult to secure longer-term “complex” commitment toward increasing resilience or remedying problems*

Disaster recovery is often rushed and short-sighted;

- *leads to “simple” options being preferred over complex solutions to inherent socio-environmental problems (land tenure, relocation inertia etc)*



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