



REPUBLIC OF VANUATU/RÉPUBLIQUE DE VANUATU

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



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**Media Release**

**22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023**

The Climate Services Division of the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geological Hazards Department (VMGD) is now confirming: **El Niño is underway**. Communities in Vanuatu are advised to prepare for potential drier conditions over the coming months.

The VMGD Principal Scientific Officer in Seasonal Forecasts, Glenda Pakoa, states, ‘The standard period from the starting of an El Niño until we start to see impacts on ground is three (3) months. However, some places may experience impacts right after three (3) months, while other places may take several months up to a year’. Ms Pakoa continues to emphasise that an El Niño does not mean there will be no rain at all. ‘We will still receive little rain here and there, but the amount received will be below normal’.

The VMGD Principal Scientific Officer in Research & Development, John Ruben, states, ‘The impact of the El Niño has not kicked in yet. Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) around Vanuatu are still warm due to the Triple-dip La Niña which ended earlier in March 2023 that is why we still receive a lot of rainfall over the past weeks’. These warm SSTs are expected to gradually ease over the coming months as the El Niño continues developing.

El Niño is a natural climate phenomenon characterized by unusually warm ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, leading to significant weather disruptions worldwide. During an El Niño event, Vanuatu usually experiences extremely low rainfall with associated impacts, **particularly during the dry season**. These may include increased day time temperatures, cold nights, and increased evaporation. These conditions associated with El Niño can lead to prolong dry period which is known as drought and could adversely affect agricultural productivity, water resources, and overall socio-economic stability of the country.

Historically, El Niño events usually occur during the month of March to May, mature during November to January then begin to decay around February and usually end in March to April of the following year. El Niño events normally last for six months, or much longer. On average, they occur every two to seven (2 -7) years. The last El Niño event that affected Vanuatu was in the 2015/2016 and historical records showed that there was reduction in water levels in rivers, low crop yields, food shortages, and as a result, impact the socio-economic wellbeing of the communities. During the 2015/16 El Niño event, the Vanuatu

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government through the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and its cluster groups, provided much needed water to islands in the Shefa province and other smaller islands in Vanuatu. El Niño impacts can be first experience with deficiency in monthly rainfall leading to agricultural drought, affecting plants before hydrological drought (major water sources). The longer drought conditions exist; it can affect the socio-economic wellbeing of the communities.

The Vanuatu Meteorology & Geo-Hazards Department urges the public, farmers, and relevant stakeholders to remain vigilant and take necessary precautions to mitigate potential risks associated with the upcoming El Niño event. Communities are advised to make use of the up-coming wet season. This is the time when troughs and low pressure systems will typically be dominant over the country, bringing much rainfall to the country as a system passes. VMGD cautions communities that *severe* impacts may likely be experienced during the 2024 dry season, however some locations are still recovering from the devastations of Twin Tropical Cyclones (TC) Judy and Kevin in March, therefore impacts may come sooner for some locations.

VMGD wished to advise the general public to consult relevant authorities for specific information on how to prepare before, during and after an El Niño event, and to seek relevant information and stay up to date with the latest information from VMGD instead of other sources that can create unnecessary panic

VMGD will continue to monitor the situation and will provide updates and guidance through the ENSO desk as necessary as its mandate. By working together and staying prepared, we can minimize the potential impacts of this El Niño event and ensure the resilience and well-being of our communities.

Updates and Information are available on our website ([www.vmgd.gov.vu](http://www.vmgd.gov.vu)), & Toll-Free number 116.

For further guidance please contact:

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**END RELEASE**

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