

VANUATU



CAPITAL:
PORT VILA



BISLAMA, ENGLISH
& FRENCH

POPULATION OF
307,000



12,189 SQ KM
IN LAND SIZE



VANUATU VATU



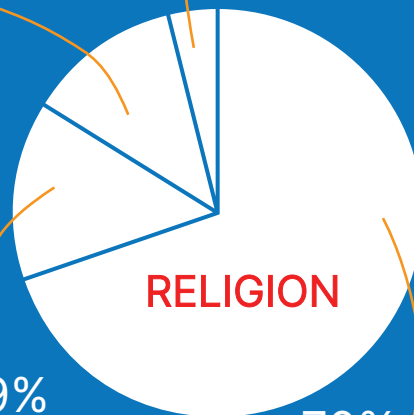
42.1% DO NOT HAVE
ACCESS TO PROPER
SANITATION

3.7% CUSTOMARY
BELIEFS

12.4%
CATHOLIC

13.9%
OTHER

70%
PROTESTANT



RELIGION

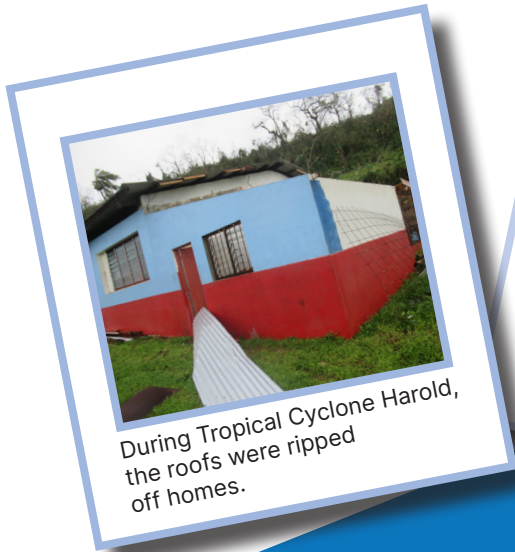


FAVOURITE SPORTS:
SOCCER
RUGBY UNION
VOLLEYBALL

MAJOR INDUSTRIES:
AGRICULTURE
OFFSHORE FINANCIAL SERVICES
TOURISM



VANUATU



During Tropical Cyclone Harold, the roofs were ripped off homes.



In these images you can see the impact TC Harold has had on St. Michel's Technical College.

Geography

Vanuatu comprises a Y-shaped archipelago of 83 islands in the South Pacific Ocean. It is mountainous with more than 20 active volcanoes and is prone to earthquakes and tidal waves. Most of the shoreline is rocky with fringing reefs and no continental shelf, plunging abruptly into the ocean depths. The closest neighbours are the Solomon Islands and Fiji.

History

Formerly known as the New Hebrides, there is a history of settlement across the islands back to 500BC. For centuries, the local people recorded their history orally, passing stories on from one generation to the next. European explorers visited the islands in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1906, it was decided without any consultation with the indigenous people that the country would become an Anglo-French Condominium. This resulted in English and French currencies, separate hospitals and police, and vehicles driving on both sides of the road.

Vanuatu finally achieved independence from France and the UK in 1980. Its new name means "Our Land Forever".

Culture

Vanuatu's culture, known as "kastom" in Bislama, is diverse. The tourist industry supports an active cottage handicraft and carving industry, including woven baskets and dyed mats, bark skirts, miniature slit-gong drums and other carvings, shell jewelry, bamboo flutes and panpipes.

The string band is the preeminent musical genre. Bands perform at village dances and weddings, and their music has been important in the emergence of a national

culture. Ceremonies typically involve an exchange of food, such as the traditional taro and yam, kava, fowl, pigs, and chicken, along with a feast. Pigs are exchanged and eaten at all important ritual occasions. The national ceremonial dish is laplap, pudding made of grated root crops or plantain mixed with coconut milk and sometimes greens and meat, wrapped in leaves, and baked for hours in a traditional earth oven.

AMS Projects in Vanuatu – St Michel Technical College

On 6 April 2020, TC Harold made landfall on the island of Espiritu Santo as an intense Category 5 system with sustained winds of over 200km/h. Harold cut across the southern end of Santo, home to Vanuatu's second largest town, Luganville, and continued eastwards impacting a further six islands and around one-third of the country's population. About 70% of structures in the area were damaged, agricultural land ruined, roads blocked, and water systems destroyed. Harold came at a time when Vanuatu had closed its borders to keep the threat of COVID-19 from its shores.

The Marist Brothers are present at the St Michel Technical College. There are about 320 students enrolled in grades 7 to 12, and a further 80 enrolled in the vocational stream of the school. Located on the western outskirts of Luganville, St Michel bore the brunt of Harold and suffered crippling damage. St Michel Technical College is seen as a beacon of hope on Espiritu Santo as it was one of the first schools on the island.

Following an emergency campaign by AMS, by the end of November 2020 much of the school had been repaired with a restoration of the technical block and the boys' bathroom block. AMS will continue to work with St. Michel's to repair other damaged parts of the school in 2021.

Further reading/resources

World Atlas (www.worldatlas.com)

World Culture Encyclopedia (www.everyculture.com)