

# EMERGENCY BROADCASTING PACIFIC REGION

## RESEARCH BRIEF

**ABC**  
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DEVELOPMENT



*Cherolyn in the studio at NBC Enga Province.  
Image credit: ABC International Development.*

# *Emergency Broadcasting Pacific Region Research Brief*

*This study was led and designed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's International Development unit (ABCID) in collaboration with our Pacific partners. Fieldwork was conducted by emergency broadcasting trainer and specialist Andrew Fisher, and analysis was undertaken by researcher Solstice Middleby. This study was implemented by ABCID under the Australian Government's Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy. ABCID extends its appreciation to all study participants for their time, insights, and generous contributions.*

*The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Government or the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Unless otherwise stated, photographs in this report are sourced from ABCID programs, ABC staff, and ABC archives.*



*Julia Kasten from Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) interviewing a village head.  
Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.*

# INTRODUCTION

*Access to timely, accurate and trusted information during disasters is an essential safeguard for Pacific communities as the region confronts increasingly frequent and severe emergencies and climate-driven disasters. Recent events such as the 2024 Vanuatu earthquake and Tropical Cyclone Lola (2023) have demonstrated both the life-saving role of broadcast media organisations, and the urgent need to strengthen the systems that support them. Geographic dispersion, limited infrastructure, linguistic diversity, and uneven access to digital connectivity mean that broadcast media—particularly radio—remain a critical channel for reaching communities.<sup>1</sup> In this context, public broadcasters remain essential partners in national disaster management.<sup>2</sup>*

This research brief presents findings from research in six Pacific countries—Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu—undertaken to understand how broadcasters and emergency agencies, including national disaster management offices, meteorological services and other official warning bodies, collaborate before, during, and after crises. Interviews were conducted with public broadcasters and disaster-management representatives, and were supported by a review of national policies, legislation, and ABC International Development (ABCID) project materials. Findings represent participant perspectives rather than a comprehensive sector-wide assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> ABC International Development. State of the Media: Pacific. Sydney: ABC International Development, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> This research focuses on public broadcasters, given their public service mandate and essential role in information dissemination during emergencies. While this commitment is central to their mission, it is not consistently legislated or formally mandated across all countries studied.

## KEY REGIONAL FINDINGS

Across the six Pacific countries studied, national broadcasters shared a strong commitment to serve their communities during emergencies, despite facing significant structural and resource constraints. The research surfaced the following regional findings:

### 1. Broadcasters are self-motivated and community-focused

Based on audience feedback, national broadcasters regard themselves as trusted voices and feel a deep sense of duty to keep communities safe during crises. Their motivation is grounded less in formal mandates and more in personal and institutional commitment to public service.

### 2. Emergency broadcasting systems remain largely informal

Most outlets rely on institutional memory or individual initiative rather than formalised frameworks. Documented emergency broadcasting plans, standard operating procedures, role descriptions, and training modules are limited, increasing risk when staff change or crises escalate.

### 3. Broadcasters face a recognition-without-resources paradox

While they are widely relied upon during emergencies, across all six countries reviewed, national broadcasters are not formally embedded within national disaster communication frameworks or priority telecommunications and resource-allocation mechanisms. This limits their ability to operate as full operational partners in disaster response and means they may not have access to sufficient resources to support their role.

### 4. Broadcast infrastructure constraints limit emergency broadcast reach

In PNG, only one in three transmitters are operational, leaving citizens in certain remote communities with limited or no access to radio services; while radio transmission sites in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands damaged by cyclone impacts in 2023 remain offline. Even in countries with more robust systems, vulnerabilities persist, such as coastally located studios exposed to tsunami risk and the absence of backup facilities.

### 5. There are wide variations in broadcasters' capacity to localise emergency information to diverse audiences

In some countries, broadcasters effectively translate and explain emergency messages, including those tailored for women, people with disabilities, older people, and linguistically marginalised communities, who, as recent research suggests, are at greater risk of harm in emergency situations.<sup>3</sup> However, this capacity varies across the region and is not applied consistently.

<sup>3</sup> See Melissa Villarreal, Carson MacPherson-Krutzky, and Mary Angelica Painter, "[Barriers and Best Practices for Inclusive Emergency Alerts and Warnings](#)," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 125 (July, 2025): 105581



Damaged building in the Yasawa Islands in Fiji.  
Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.



Mobile Journalism training at NBC in Papua New Guinea.  
Image credit: ABC International Development.



The Radio 2AP building in Samoa.  
Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.



Julia Kasten and Patience Mawa from VBTC.  
Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.

In many contexts, information is issued by emergency agencies in technical or English-only formats, requiring broadcasters to adapt messages in real time. Constraints affecting both emergency agencies and broadcasters—including staffing, training, time pressure, technical knowledge, and production capacity—shape how consistently localised and inclusive emergency information can be delivered.

## 6. Appetite is growing for regional collaboration and pooled resources

Some national broadcasters expressed strong interest in shared regional broadcast and transmission assets, such as mobile “radio-in-a-box” kits<sup>4</sup>, mobile transmitters, and backup generators, alongside open-access training repositories and peer-learning networks to exchange practice and strengthen collective resilience.

## 7. Coordination and information flow between broadcasters, national emergency agencies, and meteorological agencies vary widely, affecting the timeliness and accuracy of emergency broadcasts

Across all six countries, coordination arrangements rely primarily on informal relationships rather than formalised, legislated protocols, with no shared contact lists, formal agreements, or routine planning processes. Bureaucratic approval procedures within emergency agencies can delay public warnings. In Vanuatu, alerts have at times been issued after storms began; in Fiji, listeners reported cyclones impacting them before official bulletins were broadcast; and in PNG, fatal landslides occurred with no official response for several days. Respondents highlighted the need for clearer coordination arrangements, direct data access, and plain-language warning protocols.

## 8. A region-wide opportunity exists to reform emergency broadcasting arrangements

Several countries are reviewing or establishing disaster management legislation and institutions, creating a timely opportunity to embed broadcasters within national emergency frameworks, establish priority restoration protocols, and formalise coordination mechanisms. PNG is establishing a National Emergency Management Authority; Samoa is reviewing its Disaster and Emergency Management Act; Fiji has proposed formal broadcaster–agency agreements; and Vanuatu is negotiating similar arrangements. These reforms present a rare opportunity to institutionalise broadcasters as essential partners in national emergency management systems.

***Overall, the findings point to a reliance on professional commitment in the absence of consistent systems, alongside a timely opportunity—through ongoing reforms—to formalise broadcasters’ roles and strengthen coordination and resilience.***

<sup>4</sup> Radio-in-a-Box is a portable, low-cost FM broadcasting system designed for rapid deployment in emergencies or remote areas where conventional broadcast infrastructure is unavailable or damaged. It enables immediate local information dissemination during disasters. (Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union & UNESCO, *Radio-in-a-Box: Emergency Broadcasting Toolkit*, 2012)



Tsunami evacuation sign in Tonga. Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.



Joana Bule from VBTC and Josaia Nanuga recording for ‘Pacific Prepared’ in Pepeyo village, Efate, Vanuatu. Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.



A washed up boat from the 2022 tsunami which impacted Tonga. Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.



Dykesly Hou from the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) in the Solomon Islands interviewing a community member. Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following regional recommendations are ranked in order of priority and were informed by respondents and supported by the overall findings. They are specific to national broadcasters in the Pacific, national emergency agencies (including disaster authorities), relevant government departments and development partners supporting disaster preparedness and communications resilience.

### 1. Support development and implementation of country-level emergency broadcasting plans

**Key actors: National broadcasters and emergency agencies, with development partner support where requested.**

The findings reinforced value in developing or updating country-level emergency broadcasting plans within each national broadcaster, with a focus on operational readiness. Plans should be developed through consultation with broadcaster senior management and boards, national disaster management offices and meteorological services and relevant government departments. The focus of these plans should be how emergency broadcasting will function in practice during a crisis. Each plan should include:

- Defined communication protocols between broadcasters and emergency agencies.
- Clear procedures for issuing, verifying, updating, and disseminating warnings.
- Agreed contact lists and decision-making authority during fast-moving events.
- Plain-language and multilingual messaging templates to support timely localisation.
- Internal training requirements and designated coordination roles.
- External awareness strategies to clarify the broadcaster's emergency role.
- Commitments to scenario-based exercises and rehearsal processes.
- Monitoring, review, and periodic updating mechanisms.

### 2. Conduct national assessments of emergency broadcast infrastructure and equipment gaps

**Key actors: National broadcasters, with government and development partner support where appropriate.**

Following the establishment or strengthening of national emergency broadcasting plans, it is recommended that broadcasters and relevant authorities assess gaps in transmission infrastructure, studio resilience, backup power, connectivity, and portable broadcast capacity.

This may include:

- Reviewing the operational status of transmitters and transmission sites.
- Assessing vulnerability of studios and equipment to hazard exposure.
- Exploring strategies to better utilise existing outside broadcast equipment or mobile units for backup situations.
- Identifying priority maintenance and replacement needs.

Country-level assessments should inform any subsequent investment in regional pooled equipment or shared assets.

### 3. Strengthen recognition of emergency broadcasting within regional disaster risk reduction frameworks

**Key actors: Emergency management and disaster risk agencies, with input from national broadcasters.**

Respondents highlighted the need for emergency management authorities to more clearly recognise emergency broadcasting within disaster risk reduction and resilience frameworks, including guidance on service continuity during crises. This includes clarifying the role of broadcasters in emergency communication systems and considering priority arrangements for power and telecommunications restoration.

National broadcasters can support this process by sharing practical information on their operational requirements during emergencies, helping inform planning and coordination processes.

## 4. Set up shared portable emergency broadcast equipment

**Key actors: National broadcasters and relevant regional coordination bodies.**

Subject to identified national infrastructure gaps, respondents saw value in exploring arrangements to acquire, store, maintain, and train staff to use portable broadcasting equipment—such as low-power transmitters, basic studio kits, satellite connectivity, and backup power supplies—that can be rapidly deployed when local broadcast services are disrupted. It was noted that an existing regional organisation with experience in disaster-response coordination or media support could potentially host or manage such equipment on behalf of participating broadcasters, enabling temporary transmission of verified emergency messages until normal services are restored.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. Facilitate a regional, media-led network of broadcast engineers and technical staff

**Key actors: National broadcasters with development partner support where required.**

Findings highlighted the value of a media-led network to provide peer support, shared training, and rapid technical troubleshooting during emergencies, particularly for smaller and more isolated broadcasters<sup>6</sup>. Respondents noted that such a network could be supported through collaboration between broadcasters and development partners. In establishing this network, attention would need to be given to long-term sustainability, including ongoing resourcing, support for opportunities to collaborate, and ensuring there is a sufficient pool of trained broadcast technicians across the region.

## 6. Establish a regional coordination and content-sharing arrangement for emergency broadcasting

**Key actors: National broadcasters with input from regional media partners.**

National broadcaster respondents have shown interest to collaboratively develop a regional arrangement that enables broadcasters to support one another during major events. This includes:

- **Agreed processes for sharing emergency content** between national broadcasters in the Pacific across national borders (e.g. verified public warnings, updates, and scripts).
- **Arrangements to ensure emergency messages can continue to reach the public if a national broadcaster is disrupted.** This could involve processes that allow a neighbouring national broadcaster to temporarily transmit verified emergency information into affected areas, using existing coverage or portable broadcast equipment, until local services resume.
- **A shared resource to develop preparedness materials** that can be adapted locally (e.g. using local languages and formats), with clear permissions for reuse and adaptation.<sup>7</sup>

Emergency broadcasting is a core element of disaster communication across the Pacific, but preparedness, coordination, and resilience arrangements remain uneven. The findings and recommendations point to practical opportunities for regional coordination to strengthen the continuity and effectiveness of emergency communication.

<sup>5</sup> Comparable examples of organisations managing shared regional functions include The Pacific Community (SPC) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) that currently provide technical support and coordination to Pacific Island countries on issues such as disaster preparedness, environmental monitoring, and emergency response.

<sup>6</sup> The Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) has established elements of this network, although continued training and mentoring within the emergency broadcasting context is contingent on investment.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see: [Pacific Prepared](#)



*Traditional Fijian house known as a Bure.  
Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.*

## COUNTRY PROFILES

The following country profiles highlight context-specific strengths, constraints and reform opportunities, and should be read alongside the regional findings above. Country-specific recommendations outline priority actions for broadcasters and emergency agencies, with supporting roles for government and development partners.

### Fiji – Emergency Broadcasting Profile

#### Emergency broadcasting context

Fiji faces frequent disaster risks from cyclones, flooding, storm surges, and landslides. Emergency management is led by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), with hazard warnings issued by the Fiji Meteorological Service. The Fijian Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) is the principal public broadcaster and holds a formal mandate to disseminate emergency information during national emergencies. Radio remains the most reliable channel during disasters, particularly when power or mobile networks are disrupted.

#### Key strengths and constraints

FBC is widely trusted by audiences and maintains national reach across multiple language services. Respondents described strong professional commitment and a clear public-service ethos. At the same time, challenges relate less to institutional absence than to coordination speed and information flow, particularly during fast-moving events. Delays in receiving official updates can reduce the effectiveness of early warnings, even where systems and expertise exist. In early 2026, respondents noted that FBC staff participation in meetings with the NDMO has increased, indicating stronger routine engagement and coordination between the broadcaster and emergency authorities.

#### Preparedness, capacity, and resilience

Despite FBC's formal mandate and preparedness investments, the broadcaster does not receive priority power or telecommunications restoration, leaving continuity dependent on general infrastructure recovery. Backup generators and alternative broadcast options support continuity, but these do not guarantee full service during prolonged disruptions. FBC has taken steps to strengthen preparedness, including developing a Resilience Action Plan and internal verification procedures that prioritise accuracy over speed. Capacity to localise messages exists through translation into local languages, but respondents noted that clearer, simpler warning formats from emergency agencies would improve consistency and speed of translation.

Public awareness efforts have expanded in 2026, including the introduction of a pilot television talkback program designed to engage youth audiences with practical disaster-preparedness guidance.

#### Country-specific recommendations

Finalising formal coordination arrangements between FBC, the NDMO, and the Fiji Meteorological Service was identified as a priority by broadcast respondents to clarify roles, improve routine information sharing, and support timely public alerts.

Operational priorities identified by FBC include targeted staff training, scenario-based exercises<sup>8</sup>, and guidance on information verification during fast-moving events. Improving the accessibility of warnings—through plain-language templates co-developed by FBC and emergency agencies across iTaukei, Hindi, and English—was seen as a practical step to support consistent emergency communication across radio and digital platforms.

Broadcast respondents also called for clearer government-led arrangements with power and telecommunications providers to strengthen service-continuity arrangements for broadcasting during disasters.

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<sup>8</sup> Scenario-based training involves practising responses to realistic emergency situations to improve coordination, decision-making, and preparedness.

## Papua New Guinea (PNG) – Emergency Broadcasting Profile

### Emergency broadcasting context

PNG faces complex and overlapping disaster risks, including earthquakes, landslides, floods, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis. Disaster management is coordinated nationally through the National Disaster Centre, with provincial authorities playing a central role. PNG's national broadcaster, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), operates the country's widest media network through national and provincial radio services, as well as television services, and is often the only communication channel available during emergencies.

### Key strengths and constraints

NBC's provincial reach and local presence are major strengths, enabling place-specific information during crises. However, respondents highlighted uneven information flow from national and provincial disaster authorities, with broadcasters sometimes relying on field reporters or humanitarian partners while awaiting official confirmation. These challenges reflect decentralised systems and coordination gaps rather than broadcaster capacity.

Broadcast infrastructure limitations significantly constrain NBC's emergency reach, with respondents reporting that only around one-third of NBC transmitters are operational, leaving large rural populations without reliable access to emergency radio.

### Preparedness, capacity, and resilience

Preparedness varies across NBC's network. While staff have significant experience responding to disasters, formal emergency broadcasting protocols and training are not consistently applied across provinces. Capacity to localise messages into vernacular languages exists within NBC, but is constrained by staffing, time pressure, and verification requirements. In recent events, including major landslides, media respondents reported extended delays in receiving official confirmation, requiring reliance on field reporters or humanitarian partners.

Broadcast infrastructure reliability remains a concern, with transmission and maintenance issues affecting coverage in some regions.

### Country-specific recommendations

With establishment of a National Emergency Management Authority, respondents from NBC highlighted the importance of clarifying government expectations for information flow, coordination, and resourcing as part of NBC's public-service role during crisis events.

Broadcast respondents also emphasised the need to develop clearer guidance for NBC provincial stations during fast-moving events. These include the implementation of provincial emergency broadcasting plans through training and exercises, strengthening continuity arrangements where services fail, and investing in technical maintenance of broadcast equipment.

## Samoa – Emergency Broadcasting Profile

### Emergency broadcasting context

Samoa is regularly exposed to cyclones, flooding, tsunamis, and seismic events. Emergency management is led by national authorities, with Radio 2AP serving as the national public broadcaster<sup>9</sup>. Radio plays a central role in reaching communities during emergencies, including outer islands and diaspora audiences. A government review of Samoa's Disaster and Emergency Management Act, initiated in 2025, creates an opportunity to clarify and formalise the role of national broadcasters within emergency coordination systems.

### Key strengths and constraints

Radio 2AP benefits from strong public trust and a clear public-service mandate. Respondents described constructive working relationships with emergency agencies, though coordination often relies on informal arrangements rather than standing protocols. Information access can be affected by the timing and format of official releases.

<sup>9</sup> Television services, including TV9, are also part of Samoa's public broadcasting system, alongside Radio 2AP, which remains the primary platform for emergency broadcasting.

**Preparedness, capacity, and resilience**

Preparedness arrangements are developing but not fully institutionalised. Capacity to localise messages into Samoan exists and is regularly applied, though inclusive messaging practices are not consistently embedded across all scenarios due to staff resourcing and time constraints. Technical resilience<sup>10</sup> is supported by experienced staff, a backup generator, and a direct communication line with national disaster authorities; however, sustained television and wider broadcast continuity during prolonged events remains dependent on broader power restoration and infrastructure stability.

**Country-specific recommendations**

Evidence supports Radio 2AP and national emergency agencies establishing clearer coordination and information-sharing pathways during escalating events. Priorities identified include strengthening backup broadcast and connectivity arrangements, expanding scenario-based training for radio and television staff, clarifying shared roles under national emergency communications plans, and supporting consistent approaches to plain-language and Samoan-language messaging to improve public understanding across emergency events.

**Solomon Islands – Emergency Broadcasting Profile****Emergency broadcasting context**

Solomon Islands faces frequent hazards, including cyclones, earthquakes, floods, and tsunamis. Solomon Islands' national broadcaster, the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC), operates national radio services that remain critical during disasters, particularly when telecommunications are disrupted.

**Key strengths and constraints**

SIBC's shortwave and AM services are widely trusted and can reach remote and outer island communities; however, access depends on household ownership of functioning shortwave receivers, which recent audience research indicates is uneven. Respondents noted strong staff commitment, but also highlighted outdated emergency broadcasting plans, limited technical redundancy, and cyclone-damaged transmission sites that remain offline and continue to constrain emergency broadcast reach.

**Preparedness, capacity, and resilience**

Preparedness arrangements are largely informal and emergency broadcasting plans in SIBC have not been comprehensively updated for several years, increasing reliance on individual judgement during emergencies. Capacity to translate warnings into Pidgin exists within SIBC but often relies on presenter judgement rather than standardised guidance. Technical and staffing constraints limit the ability to consistently adapt messages, particularly during prolonged or overlapping emergencies.

**Country-specific recommendations**

Respondents identified the need for SIBC, in coordination with national emergency agencies, to update emergency broadcasting plans, address ageing transmission infrastructure critical for reaching remote and outer islands, and strengthen routine coordination with disaster and meteorological agencies through clearer information-sharing arrangements and joint preparedness activities.

Respondents also noted opportunities for stronger collaboration between SIBC and provincial and community media partners to support consistent emergency communication during major events.

**Tonga – Emergency Broadcasting Profile****Emergency broadcasting context**

Tonga faces high exposure to cyclones, volcanic activity, tsunamis, and earthquakes. Emergency management is led by the National Emergency Management Office, with Tonga's national broadcaster, the Tonga Broadcasting Corporation (TBC), holding a formal mandate within national emergency systems.

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<sup>10</sup> Technical resilience refers to the ability of broadcasting systems and supporting infrastructure to withstand disruptions and be restored quickly during emergencies.

TBC demonstrates a comparatively high level of institutional readiness and is formally embedded in emergency coordination arrangements, offering practical lessons for other countries seeking to formalise broadcaster–agency coordination. Respondents described strong collaboration with authorities and clear operational expectations.

Remaining constraints relate primarily to broadcast infrastructure exposure, long-term maintenance requirements, and the need to sustain training and simulations as staff change over time.

### **Preparedness, capacity, and resilience**

TBC maintains documented procedures and a Business Continuity Plan, and conducts regular simulations with emergency agencies. Capacity to localise and adapt messages for diverse audiences is comparatively strong and purposefully applied.

### **Country-specific recommendations**

Findings support TBC and national authorities continuing investment in broadcast infrastructure protection including protecting and upgrading core studio and transmission equipment, maintenance of simulation exercises, and sharing of practice-based learning with other Pacific broadcasters.

Broadcast respondents also saw regular technical and operational training for engineers and on-air staff as critical, helping reduce reliance on a small number of individuals.

## **Vanuatu – Emergency Broadcasting Profile**

### **Emergency broadcasting context**

Vanuatu faces some of the highest hazard exposure in the region, including cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis. As Vanuatu’s national broadcaster, the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) provides national radio services that remain critical during disruptions.

### **Key strengths and constraints**

VBTC’s shortwave radio services provide important coverage to outer islands and remote communities; however, access remains contingent on receiver availability and varies across the population. Respondents highlighted staff adaptability during recent disasters, including the use of alternative transmission methods when systems failed. However, coordination and information flow challenges persist during fast-moving events. Respondents reported instances where official alerts reached broadcasters after hazardous conditions had already begun, undermining early warning effectiveness.

### **Preparedness, capacity, and resilience**

Preparedness arrangements remain largely reactive, shaped by repeated disaster response rather than formal planning. Capacity within VBTC to localise messaging exists but is constrained by staffing, technical resources, and the timing of official information. Repeated disasters have damaged transmission infrastructure, with some cyclone-affected sites remaining non-operational, constraining national broadcast reach during emergencies.

### **Country-specific recommendations**

Evidence highlights the need for continued government investment in resilient broadcast infrastructure, alongside VBTC-led integration of satellite internet connectivity into routine operations and practical staff training to support consistent emergency messaging.

Ongoing negotiations between VBTC, emergency agencies, and national disaster authorities provide a timely opportunity to formalise information-sharing and service-continuity arrangements. Broadcast respondents also identified value in establishing a dedicated emergency broadcasting coordination role within VBTC to support implementation and coordination of these operational measures. Additionally, there was interest in exploring regionally shared, deployable broadcasting capacity that could be mobilised during large-scale emergencies to complement national systems.

NAMI DENJA ZONE  
E DE DANGER TSUNAMI

TSUNAMI  
EVACUATION ZONE



*Tsunami evacuation sign in Vanuatu.  
Image credit: Fred Hooper, ABC International Development.*