

Digicel restores network on Tanna

YESTERDAY MARKED A monumental achievement as Digicel restored network to the severely damaged island of Tanna with services back at the main town of Lenakel and neighbouring area of Isangel.

Cyclone Pam passed through the island, with category 5 wind gusts of up to 340kmph on March 14.

Large-scale damage on Tanna was reported to have affected the majority of the island. Located on the southern part of Vanuatu, Tanna is 40 km long and 19 km wide and is the most populous island in Tafea Province, with a population of about 29,000. Communication services were heavily affected, with every tower on Tanna requiring equipment replacement and some towers requiring rebuilding. Technicians had to be flown in helicopters and charter flights to access and repair the damaged telecommunications towers high up on Tanna's



Digicel has been busy connecting the people in the islands through their network. Here a chief from Epi shakes hand with Digicel CEO Simon Fraser.

mountains.

Commenting from Port Vila today CEO of Digicel Vanuatu, Simon Fraser said, "the restoration of services to Lenakel and Isangel are so monumental as the complete destruction of one of our key towers in Erromango meant that our network had to be redesigned to utilise satellite services to restore

communications to the areas."

The restoration efforts of Tanna commenced on Tuesday last week and the teams have worked directly with the Government and the local community on Tanna to get the network back. Restoring the network in Lenakel and Isangel, Tanna's main towers now means that those living near or travelling to Lenakel or Isangel

areas can now be contacted by family and friends.

Commenting from Port Vila yesterday CEO of Digicel Vanuatu, Simon Fraser said, "Today we reached a major milestone in restoring network to parts of Tanna, but we couldn't have done it without the support of the Government, the NDMO, the local communities and our international Digicel teams. We at Digicel are fortunate enough to be part of a large Pacific community to have access to resources and partners like Island Hoppers help restore the network. SES, our satellite partner, was also instrumental in supplying extra bandwidth to help make the connection of Lenakel and Isangel possible. Huawei provided significant support by sending two engineers to Vanuatu and offering considerable remote support from their HQ in China. These partners have not only come to our aid but

have also allowed the resources in Vanuatu to concentrate on efforts with the Government, TVL and other organisations. We also need to thank the communities that have also helped band together to clear roads, airstrips and lend a hand loading and un-packing gear and working together to distribute aid. To all of those who have helped and continue to help, thank you- we are truly grateful."

Communication is vital in keeping people connected and families and friends can now call their loved ones in Tanna. Digicel is giving all customers on Tanna Vt200 credit once towers are restored to enable them to easily contact family and friends. Digicel will be setting up mobile charging stations for this purpose also.

It's been over a week since the cyclone and like the rest of Vanuatu the people of Tanna are focused on the enormous task of rebuilding.

Red Cross distributes aid to meet emergency needs

ON FRIDAY, RED CROSS was the first organisation sanctioned by the Government of Vanuatu to begin relief distributions to communities devastated by Cyclone Pam.

Relief items included tarpaulins, tools for repairing homes, sleeping mats, lamps, kitchen equipment and personal hygiene items. Distributions will be scaled up in the coming days and weeks.

Red Cross' emphasis during the first week of the emergency was on supporting people in evacuation centres, mobilising relief materials