

# Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – Volcanic Eruptions

MAY 14, 2021

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE

|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <b>110,600</b>  | <b>23,445</b>   | <b>4,417</b>  | <b>18,927</b>  |
| Estimated Population of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines<br><i>GoSVG – May 2021</i> | Estimated Total Population Evacuated From High-Risk Areas<br><i>CDEMA – May 9, 2021</i> | Estimated Number of People Remaining in Official Evacuation Sites<br><i>CDEMA – May 9, 2021</i> | Estimated Number of People Sheltering in Communities<br><i>CDEMA – May 9, 2021</i> |

- A series of explosive eruptions from La Soufrière Volcano spreads volcanic ash across Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, disrupting livelihoods and potable water supply and generating public health risks.
- Early warning systems enable the timely evacuation of 23,000 people with no volcano-related deaths reported to date. The GoSVG determines that people may return safely to some areas of Saint Vincent.
- USAID/BHA provides an additional \$3.8 million in FY 2021 funding to support the humanitarian response, bolstering delivery of food, health, logistics, and WASH assistance and bringing total USAID/BHA contributions to nearly \$4.7 million to date.



|   |                        |                                      |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN FUNDING</b>   |                        |                                      |
| For the Volcano Response in FY 2021   |                        |                                      |
|   | USAID/BHA <sup>1</sup> | \$4,023,826                          |
| <i>For complete funding breakdown with partners, see detailed chart on page 6</i> |                        | <b>Total<sup>2</sup> \$4,023,826</b> |

<sup>1</sup> USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)  
<sup>2</sup> USAID/BHA has also provided \$640,000 to the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines volcano response through existing contracts and programs, bringing the total USAID/BHA funding dedicated to the response to \$4,663,826. The May 14 USAID press release reports \$3.8 million in new funding to partners, separately from \$123,826 provided by USAID/BHA for in-kind relief commodities and associated transport costs, as well as \$100,000 to SVGRC reported in an April 13 press release.

## TIMELINE

**April 8, 2021**

The GoSVG issues an evacuation order for areas surrounding La Soufrière, raising the volcano alert level to red

**April 9, 2021**

La Soufrière emits an explosive eruption, sending volcanic ash across the country; U.S. Ambassador Linda S. Tagliatela issues a disaster declaration for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

**April 15, 2021**

SVGRC provides additional relief assistance to affected households with \$100,000 from USAID/BHA

**May 4, 2021**

A shipment of USAID/BHA-provided relief commodities arrives in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

**May 6, 2021**

The GoSVG downgrades the alert level for La Soufrière to orange, signaling that evacuated populations may return to parts of Saint Vincent

**May 14, 2021**

USAID/BHA announces an additional \$3.8 million in funding to support the humanitarian response

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### **La Soufrière Erupts Explosively, Thousands Evacuate**

On April 8, the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Center (UWI-SRC) observed a shift in seismic activity at La Soufrière Volcano, located on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' Saint Vincent Island, indicating increased risk of explosive eruptions. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (GoSVG) issued an evacuation order for the estimated 19,000 individuals living within 6.2 miles of La Soufrière on the same day, while the GoSVG National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) declared a red alert, the highest of four alert levels, for the volcano. Within less than 24 hours, La Soufrière erupted explosively, generating ashfall across Saint Vincent.

Between April 9 and 22, La Soufrière emitted several explosive eruptions, generating heavy ashfall and pyroclastic density currents—dangerous, rapidly-moving flows of ash, lava, pumice, and volcanic gas—on Saint Vincent, as well as ashfall on the Grenadine Islands and neighboring countries. NEMO, with the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross (SVGRC), supported the evacuation of approximately 23,300 people to official shelters and safer locations with relatives or friends, according to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). The vast majority of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' estimated population of 110,600 has been affected by ashfall, sulfur dioxide emissions, and restricted access to potable water due to the volcano's activity, according to NEMO.

Seismic activity at La Soufrière has remained low since April 22, when the volcano last emitted an explosive eruption and vented ash, according to UWI-SRC. However, lahars—rain-induced volcanic mudflows—and steam plumes have been observed in the northern part of Saint Vincent since April 28. Due to the reduced volcanic activity, NEMO lowered the hazard alert level for La Soufrière to orange on May 6, allowing residents of communities located in the hazard zones south of the volcano on Saint Vincent to return and resume daily activities. However, UWI-SRC advises that conditions remain hazardous due to potential resumption of volcanic explosions and production of lahars. As of May 9, approximately 4,400 individuals remained in 84 official emergency shelters, while approximately 18,900 people continued to shelter with friends or relatives in private homes, CDEMA reports. Displacement figures remain fluid as populations return to their communities.

### **Heavy Rainfall Worsens Water Supply Issues**

Heavy rains generated widespread flooding and landslides across several areas of Saint Vincent in late April, resulting in damage to houses and some evacuation shelters and rendering some transportation routes briefly impassable, according to NEMO. Lahars also caused notable damage and erosion along parts of the island's coastline. The GoSVG relocated some evacuees to churches, schools, and other shelter facilities, as many of the

official shelters were not designed to withstand heavy rainfall. A CDEMA assessment team observed ash accumulation of more than two feet in several communities in the red hazard zone—the area at highest risk of impacts from volcanic activity—of Saint Vincent on April 28. As rainfall can cause ash, mud, and silt to enter rivers, the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology warned of contamination to Saint Vincent’s water supply and possible disruptions to the delivery of supplies to and from the island. The GoSVG had restored nearly 90 percent of the water supply countrywide as of April 29, with all official shelters reportedly receiving a sufficient supply of potable water as of May 6. Challenges remain, as water supply in many areas remains inconsistent and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines lacks capacity for water quality testing; many people prefer to rely on bottled water and the large amounts of bottled water distributed in recent weeks have strained the country’s recycling system, the UN reports.

### **Humanitarian Agencies Assess Damage, Needs; UN Issues Funding Appeal**

Immediate, priority needs among displaced households include food, health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance, according to the UN. In official evacuation shelters, relief actors have also expressed needs for support to prevent gender-based violence and improve WASH conditions, particularly to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Across Saint Vincent, humanitarian agencies engaged in the response are prioritizing the provision of safe drinking water, restoration of operations at health facilities, and support for shelter and livelihoods recovery.

Populations on Saint Vincent are facing an increased risk of food insecurity due to crop and livelihood losses, decreased food access, and reduced access to imported food due to transportation delays, the UN World Food Program (WFP) reports. A team composed of personnel from the GoSVG, the UN, and regional organizations estimated that recent activity at La Soufrière resulted in approximately \$134.1 million in agriculture sector losses in the most heavily-affected areas of Saint Vincent. Assessments recently completed by a UN environmental assessment team indicate that volcanic activity has damaged 80 and 100 percent of agricultural lands and forests in orange and red hazard zones, respectively, affecting the country’s main supply of fresh produce. Additionally, UN personnel warned that ash and sulfur dioxide from La Soufrière have increased water turbidity, preventing fishing activities.

On April 20, the UN issued a funding appeal requesting \$29.2 million for the humanitarian response to the La Soufrière eruptions. Funding received will support food security, livelihoods, health, protection, shelter, and WASH interventions and contribute to recovery and rehabilitation efforts, including ash cleanup and shelter reconstruction, in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as relief activities supporting populations in five neighboring countries affected by ashfall from La Soufrière. Donors had contributed approximately \$6.2 million, or 21 percent of the total appeal, as of May 8, the UN reports.

### **USG and National, Regional Disaster Management Agencies Mobilize**

As of mid-May, NEMO continues to lead humanitarian activities in response to the eruptions, including the distribution of relief commodities to displaced populations in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. A disaster relief unit deployed by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)—an organization of Caribbean countries—and USAID/BHA partner WFP are supporting the GoSVG to manage incoming assistance at Saint Vincent’s port. USAID/BHA partner SVGRC immediately mobilized following the eruption, deploying volunteers and staff to support authorities in evacuation activities and distributing relief commodities and safe drinking water to affected households, and continues to provide critical support to evacuees.

CDEMA and NEMO are also coordinating with several UN agencies to deliver multi-sector assistance to populations affected by the volcano’s impacts. Humanitarian actors are providing cash transfers to

support households in meeting basic needs and supporting the GoSVG to deliver health, protection, and WASH services and various relief commodities. Relief agencies also continue to support impact assessments and GoSVG planning for livelihoods support and recovery interventions.

On April 9, U.S. Ambassador Linda S. Taglialatela declared a disaster for the effects of volcanic eruptions in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; in response, USAID/BHA provided \$100,000 to the SVGRC for the delivery of emergency food assistance and relief commodities. With \$3.8 million in additional Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 funding, USAID/BHA is supporting the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and WFP to provide humanitarian assistance, including emergency food assistance, health services, and WASH support. USAID/BHA has also dispatched relief commodities, including water containers and hygiene kits, from its warehouse in Miami, Florida. Through existing contracts and programs, USAID/BHA also provided \$640,000 to bolster NEMO and SVGRC emergency response activities, CDEMA and WFP logistics efforts, and UWI-SRC monitoring of La Soufrière, bringing the total USAID/BHA assistance to the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines humanitarian response to nearly \$4.7 million.

## NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL, AND U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

### KEY FIGURES



**\$500,000**

In dedicated USAID/BHA FY 2021 funding to support PAHO health activities

### HEALTH

The recent volcanic eruptions damaged health facilities and disrupted access to health services in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, while ash and sulfur dioxide generated by the volcano generated risk of increased respiratory illnesses and worsened health outcomes for individuals with pre-existing conditions. In response, with \$500,000 in USAID/BHA funding, PAHO is providing medical supplies and equipment, as well as water treatment and storage supplies, to health facilities to support the restoration of essential health services. PAHO is also mobilizing medical teams and public health personnel to scale up health services—including mental health and psychosocial support services—for affected populations and providing technical support to strengthen local capacity for the prevention, detection, and control of diseases, including COVID-19.



**\$650,000**

In dedicated USAID/BHA FY 2021 funding to support UNICEF WASH activities

### WASH

WASH assistance is one of the priority needs identified by the GoSVG following the La Soufrière explosions, which caused a temporary suspension of the public water supply system on Saint Vincent and generated ongoing water quality concerns. To encourage an effective WASH response, UNICEF has established a coordination platform with other organizations conducting WASH activities, including CDEMA and PAHO. Immediately upon request from the GoSVG, UNICEF delivered pre-positioned dignity kits, water bladders, water containers, and water purification tablets to emergency shelters in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

With \$650,000 in USAID/BHA funding, UNICEF is expanding its WASH response in Saint Vincent. The UN agency is working with partners to

provide safe drinking water by conducting water system assessments and providing water testing, treatment, storage, and supply services in shelters and at the community and household levels, reaching an estimated 20,000 people. In addition, UNICEF is bolstering the availability of basic sanitation and waste management services, providing household hygiene kits, and training community health workers, government staff, and volunteers on maintenance of WASH facilities. The GoSVG Ministry of Health, PAHO, and UNICEF are coordinating to conduct hygiene promotion and awareness raising sessions to further reduce public health risks in affected areas.

USAID/BHA also provided pre-positioned water bladders, water containers, household hygiene kits, and additional hygiene items to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The commodities, which will support 6,000 people, arrived on May 4 along with crutches, wheelchairs, and walkers for displaced individuals living with disabilities.



**10,000**

People targeted for WFP food assistance supported by USAID/BHA

## **LOGISTICS AND FOOD ASSISTANCE**

With USAID/BHA funding through an existing regional program, WFP is providing critical logistics assistance and technical support to NEMO and CDEMA. In early April, WFP established a logistics hub on the island to bolster response coordination efforts and supported the deployment of first responders from CDEMA, WFP, and other relief agencies. The UN agency continues to provide technical assistance to NEMO regarding the processing, management, and dispatch of relief commodities, including items received through unsolicited donations.

WFP also transported logistics equipment and relief commodities to Saint Vincent via a dedicated vessel from Barbados and an airlift from the UN Humanitarian Response Depot in Panama with previous USAID/BHA funding and other donor support, amid transportation challenges caused by ongoing ashfall from La Soufrière. Additionally, the governments of neighboring countries—including Guyana, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia—have provided transportation support for humanitarian personnel and deployed vessels with emergency relief supplies, including bottled water, food, shelter materials, and water containers, to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

With \$1 million in FY 2021 USAID/BHA funding, WFP will expand technical support to bolster the logistics capacity of NEMO, CDEMA, and humanitarian partners in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the coming months. The UN agency will also continue to provide direct logistics assets, services, and supply chain management support for the humanitarian response.

To further bolster logistics capacity, USAID/BHA also deployed a team of three individuals from the Americas Support Team—a group of disaster response technical advisors from the Fairfax County, Virginia, Fire and Rescue Department—to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on April 26 to provide technical and logistical support to the UN Disaster Assessment and

Coordination and UN environmental assessment teams.

USAID/BHA has also provided \$1 million in FY 2021 funding to WFP for provision of emergency food assistance—in the form of unconditional cash and voucher assistance—to support 10,000 people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines during the coming year.



3

Number of countries in the Caribbean supported by VDAP

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION POLICY AND PRACTICE

USAID/BHA has provided IFRC with \$650,000 in FY 2021 funding to conduct health, livelihoods, protection, and shelter interventions to support affected households to recover from the volcano’s impacts and continue to help communities prepare for future disasters. IFRC is providing cash assistance and vouchers for the purchase of agricultural tools and seeds, delivering information regarding sustainable and resilient livelihood practices, and delivering multipurpose cash assistance to support households in rebuilding livelihoods and addressing basic needs.

The Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP), a cooperative program of the U.S. Geological Survey and USAID/BHA that provides technical assistance to national volcano monitoring organizations, has collaborated with UWI-SRC since the 1990s, supporting counterparts in Dominica, Montserrat, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. VDAP donated volcano monitoring instrumentation to UWI-SRC in January 2021; signals detected with the equipment bolstered UWI-SRC forecasting and supported rapid issuance of warnings and evacuation notices.

With previous funding, USAID/BHA also supported WFP to bolster disaster preparedness and response capacity among disaster management agencies in the Caribbean region, including CDEMA and NEMO. Previously-provided funding also supported NEMO-led evacuation operations and immediate humanitarian relief efforts by SVGRC.

### USAID HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES RESPONSE IN FY 2021<sup>1</sup>

| IMPLEMENTING PARTNER   | ACTIVITY  | LOCATION    | AMOUNT             |
|--|---|-------------|--------------------|
| <b>USAID/BHA</b>   |   |             |                    |
| IFRC   | Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Practice                 | Countrywide | \$650,000          |
| PAHO   | Health  | Countrywide | \$500,000          |
| SVGRC  | Food Assistance, WASH                                       | Countrywide | \$100,000          |
| UNICEF   | WASH  | Countrywide | \$650,000          |
| WFP  | Food Assistance—Cash Transfers, Vouchers; Logistics Support | Countrywide | \$2,000,000        |
|  | In-Kind Relief Commodities                                  |             | \$113,266          |
|  | Logistics Support   |             | \$10,560           |
| <b>TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES RESPONSE IN FY 2021<sup>2</sup></b> |   |             | <b>\$4,023,826</b> |

<sup>1</sup> Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of May 14, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> USAID/BHA has also provided \$640,000 to the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines volcano response through existing contracts and programs, bringing the total USAID/BHA funding dedicated to the response to \$4,663,826. The May 14 USAID press release reports \$3.8 million in new funding to partners, separately from \$123,826 provided by USAID/BHA for in-kind relief commodities and associated transport costs, as well as \$100,000 to SVGRC reported in an April 13 press release.

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## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)