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## When words can only say so much

On April 6, Cyclone Harold struck Espiritu Santo and surrounding islands. The cyclone was rated Category 5, and has caused immense devastation. Perhaps a third of Vanuatu's population has been impacted by the natural disaster across seven islands.

The cyclone arrived while Vanuatu, like all of the world, was grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to strict measures, the nation appeared to have avoided cases of the virus. For Harold to then strike the islands seems unbelievable. Luganville, the city where the South Pacific World War II Museum project is based, has suffered damage to at least 70 per cent of its buildings, and a heavy toll has been taken on the fabric of the island. Only those who were there could tell you what it was really like, and at the time of writing, the full toll is not yet known.



After Harold—Luganville counts the cost. Picture Leo Pax.

The newsletter you are reading marks some of the enormity of what has happened, with photos from the cyclone's rampage. But it is also a newsletter of hope, and thanks. Anyone who has ever been touched by Vanuatu and its people will know that none are more resilient and able to emerge anew. There are willing hands from other nations who are good friends of Vanuatu and are there to assist, even if the aid must come at a literal arms length because of the coronavirus.

And the Museum? We are still here. Physically, for yes our mini museum escaped unscathed. So too did our staff – Lengkon, Marina, and Melody. And our board members too. We give thanks for that and when Cyclone Harold and the pandemic are one day memories, what will be remembered is the spirit that got everyone through. Thank you for all your support and faith in us.








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How fortune smiled on us. At left is a very large tree to the rear of the mini—museum. In the right hand picture you can see how it toppled away from the building. That is not all. Inside at the time were manager Lengkon, and Melody, wrapping items against damage by water. We are so thankful they were not hurt.



This aerial picture gives an idea of the devastation left by the cyclone. The church at right is Centenary Church, still standing proud. We know that our late manager Alma Wensi, whose church this was, would be offering praise and working tirelessly all at once if he was still with us. - picture Leo Pax.

The iconic coconut tree plantations around Luganville lie stripped and battered, testimony to how the incredible winds battered the city.



# And just remember—there was a time before all this and there is a time after



The Jeep on the left was owned by the Sheen family who lived on the Gold Coast in Australia. The late Darryl Sheen was a TV and film producer who worked on series' such as Mission Impossible, Flipper and many other Hollywood productions shot up in Queensland. Darryl found the Jeep being used on a production on the Gold Coast, bought it and had it shipped to Aore Island where he and his wife Janis had a property. They nicknamed the Jeep Nellie after nurse Nellie in 'South Pacific' and continued to drive the Jeep around their property on the island for many years to come. The family several years ago donated Nellie to the Museum, and now after an amazing restoration job. Nellie is back in running order. When the tourists come back, Nellie will be waiting to transport them.



In March the decision was taken to close the mini-museum for three months as tourists could not come to Espiritu Santo because of coronavirus. We took the chance to farewell and thank Melody for her time with us; here she is with Marina (left), chairman Brad, and manager Lengkon. Thanks Melody!



Here's Charlie, new arrival in the family of board members Rayman and Mary. Congratulations to all, and just a thought. When Charlie adds a few more years, the events we are living will already be part of history.

## To our friends everywhere—stay safe

