

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

PACIFIC: CYCLONE HETA

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

Tropical Cyclone Heta hit the small Pacific island state of Niue on Jan 6, having earlier passed both Samoa and Tonga on its track. It maintained average wind speeds of over 200km/h with gusts of up to almost 300km/h. Hardest hit, **Niue** experienced considerable damage to its buildings, infrastructure and crops. In addition to category five storm winds, the cyclone created huge waves which caused much of the destruction. An estimated 75 per cent of houses were damaged, while the island's only hospital and some municipal buildings were completely destroyed. Around 200 people are homeless and have lost all their belongings. Food crops have been destroyed. There has been one confirmed death and some injuries; two persons are still reported missing. Communications with the island have been hampered as the main satellite dish was lost during the storm.

No loss of life has been reported on **Samoa**, but there has been damage buildings and crops, especially on the island of Savaii, but also on the main island of Upolu. The water supply has been affected, electricity is still down in some villages and according to a government assessment eighty percent of crops in Savaii have been destroyed.

In **Tonga**, a few houses were destroyed on the northern islands of Tafahi and Nuiatoputapu, with several others losing their roofs. There has been substantial damage to crops, which could affect food supplies in coming months.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

A first assessment team, which included staff from Civil Defence, NZAID, AusAID, and a New Zealand Red Cross disaster response delegate, reached Niue in the early morning of Thursday 8 Jan, to assess the damage and coordinate the distribution of relief items. The New Zealand Hercules plane also carried 1000 tarpaulins, 100 blankets, water pumps, portable generators and compressors, three satellite phones and other relief equipment supplied by the Government of New Zealand.

The New Zealand Red Cross is sending NZ\$14,000 worth of emergency relief supplies to Niue to cover the most immediate humanitarian needs. The emergency packs which include blankets, sheets, cooking sets, and hygiene items were mobilised by the Fiji Red Cross from its disaster preparedness stock, while the Cook Island Red Cross also made relief items available. In addition, clothes for the estimated 200 people most adversely affected by the cyclone are being sent up. Based on further needs assessments further relief items may be dispatched over the next few days if required.

The Samoa Red Cross Society (SRCS) mobilised 100 volunteers to provide basic emergency relief to those left most vulnerable by the cyclone in Savaii, Upolu and Manono. Distribution of relief items from pre-positioned

stock on both islands started immediately after the disaster, and so far the SRCS has distributed 168 tarpaulins, 888 blankets, 195 water containers, 493 bed sheets, as well as hammers, nails, cooking pots and lanterns. In order to facilitate a more accurate assessment of the damage, an aerial survey was carried out on Thursday. SRCS have also hired two water trucks to provide fresh drinking water for those villagers in Savaii whose water sources were contaminated during the cyclone. It is expected that the first phase of the relief operation will continue for another two weeks.

In Tonga, an assessment team comprising a Tonga Red Cross staff member, an UNDAC team member and a government official, carried out a survey of the northern islands as soon as it was safe to fly. The Tongan Red Cross was able to distribute recently pre-positioned emergency relief supplies in Nuiatoputapu. Fifteen tarpaulins were distributed to those whose houses had been destroyed or badly damaged.

The Federation's regional delegation in Suva has been working closely with all Red Cross partners in the region to facilitate coordination of relief efforts. Future needs will include local re-stocking of relief supplies already distributed, while rehabilitation needs including housing and food security are still being assessed.

For a full description of National Society profiles, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.