

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

COOK ISLANDS: TROPICAL CYCLONE

13 December 2001

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

The Disaster

Rarotonga, the main island of the Cook Islands, and the southern island of Mangaia, were hit by Tropical Cyclone Trina between 29 November and 3 December 2001. Tropical Cyclone Trina formed about 70 km south-southeast of Rarotonga in late evening on 29 November 2001. It then tracked slowly northeast, with average wind speeds reaching 70 km/h on 2 December and momentary gusts of over 130 km/h. It passed between Rarotonga and Mangaia on 1-2 December and brought heavy rain and rough seas with heavy swell, causing flooding of coastal areas on the both islands.

While flooding on Rarotonga was not serious, Mangaia was hit by its worst flooding in almost half a century, where low-lying parts were covered by up to two metres of water. No serious injury has been reported despite reports of some landslides and inland roads washed away. The damage was mostly on crops and livestock: 90 percent of the taro crop was reported submerged and 60 percent of livestock drowned. The ensuing rain that did not end until 8 December delayed the draining of water from the taro patches in low-lying inland areas. Aside from loss of the taro crop, which is the staple food for the island's population, the banana and breadfruit trees have also been damaged.

Despite earlier concerns over water contamination, the island's water supply system is running properly. However, are only available for a couple of hours in the evening. People usually depend on communal and family water tanks for their drinking water. With the Canada Fund's assistance for repairing old tanks and water pipes, there will be a sufficient capacity to provide the island's 228 households, or 744 people including three babies, with clean water.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Cook Islands Red Cross Society (CIRCS) is keeping close contact with the Government of the Cook Islands and is monitoring the situation. The society's Mangaia Branch has been involved in the damage and needs assessment on Mangaia.

Although the initial assessment found that there is no immediate need for external assistance, it is expected that the island's food shortage will deteriorate and become widespread towards the middle of January 2002, with available crops and cash consumed over the holiday season. CIRCS has taken the initiative to arrange for the food aid on Mangaia with the financial assistance from New Zealand High Commission. The Society has compiled necessary data on the nutritional requirement of the island's population in consultation with local nutritionists, and the estimated costs, and started working on a logistics and distribution system.

For a full description of the National Society profile, 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.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

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

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