

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

TONGA: TROPICAL CYCLONE

4 January 2002

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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. Tonga is covered by the Federation's Pacific regional appeal 01.40/02.

The Situation

Tropical Cyclone Waka, which battered the South Pacific Kingdom of Tonga with windspeeds of up to 250 km per hour on New Year's Eve, has left a trail of destruction in the two northernmost island groups of Vava'u and Niua. No serious human casualties have been reported, but homes and crops have been severely damaged or destroyed. Vava'u is some 300 km north of the Tongan capital of Nuku'alofa on the main island of Tongatapu and Niua another 240 km north of Vava'u.

Initial assessments conducted by the Tonga Red Cross Society in Vava'u (population 16,000, landmass 115 square km) found that homes of 320 households have been severely damaged or destroyed, with another 300-400 houses partially damaged. The Red Cross assessment was confirmed by the separate assessments conducted by the Governments of Australia and New Zealand. Most of the traditional food crops like coconuts and breadfruit have been damaged, and the local food supply is expected to last only for next two to three weeks.

While the islands of Niuatoputapu and Niufo'ou, both in the northernmost Niua island group, suffered relatively lighter structural damage, cyclone Waka reportedly destroyed the entire crops, leaving the islands' population with food supply of only 10 days. The population of Niua is fewer than 1,200, landmass 18 square km.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The National Disaster Management Committee of Tonga and the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) are maintaining close contact, and have identified the immediate needs in shelters and foods. The Government of the Kingdom of Tonga have made a request for the Governments of Australia and New Zealand to provide assistance in covering shelter needs. AusAid is presently planning to send 50 marquees, 150 tents, 650 tarpaulins as well as ropes and water purification tablets by air. The New Zealand Government is expected to come up with further support to cover any extra needs in shelters. It is planned that TRCS will be in charge of organizing the distribution of these relief supplies.

TRCS is also distributing plastic sheets, hurricane lamps, and cooking utensils from its own stock of relief items pre-positioned in Vava'u and on the main island of Tongatapu, which have been made available by the financial assistance of the Japanese Red Cross Society.

TRCS has launched a national appeal for food aid, and is planning to ferry food supplies to affected areas next week. The Secretary General of TRCS has been in Vava'u and coordinating the relief actions together with the members of TRCS Vava'u Branch Committee.

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

For further details please contact :

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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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