

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Tonga: Earthquake Tsunami

Information bulletin n° 01
GLIDE TS-2009-000210-TON
5 October 2009

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation. The Tonga Red Cross Society will, however, accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected population.

[<click here to view the map of the affected area, or here for detailed contact information>](#)

The Situation

On 29 September 2009, at the universal time of 17:48:07, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre reported an earthquake measuring a magnitude of 8.3, which generated a Pacific wide tsunami warning and this included Tonga. The earthquake lasted over five minutes, and its epicentre was located 190 km southwest of American Samoa. The most affected area of Tonga was Niua Tongatapu.

Assessment reports indicate 76 homes have been destroyed with nine confirmed deaths; and a further five people in critical condition who were flown to Nuku'alofa. In addition, there are approximately 800 displaced people with two local staff being involved in the operation. By 4 October 2009 the total number of people affected had risen to 465.

The increase in the numbers of displaced people has created additional pressure on Tonga Red Cross Society to meet all the affected communities' needs. In addition, the trauma caused by the tsunami on the population of Tonga, who rarely experience a massive natural disaster has created the need for significant emotional and social support. The Tongan Government is currently trying to persuade displaced people to return to their land, and homes. However, the people are reluctant and scared. These communities who experienced the affects of this disaster will require support for a significant period of time to come.

The main water supply in the affected area is not functioning and residents are reliant on a small number of reserve tanks. It is currently not clear how much water is there and how long it is likely to last. The national government is currently shipping water to the island to supplement existing water supplies. The island is very hot and dry so lack of water on the island may have health implications for the population.

At the time of this Information Bulletin, the Government of Tonga have declared the emergency phase over and are now moving into the recovery phase and will be sending an assessment team into Niua Topatapu (NTT) to look at wider recovery issues; and the Tonga Red Cross Society's Secretary General, Mr. Sione will be part of the government assessment team.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) staff and volunteers have been actively supporting the affected population of Niua Tongatapu since the tsunami, through the distribution of relief items including 200 blankets, 100 cooking sets, 100 hurricane lamps, 100 plastic buckets, 200 tarpaulins and 65 20lt water containers. TRCS are also in the process of distributing hygiene kits.

An initial four-person team of TRCS staff travelled to Niua Tongatapu to support the actions of volunteers; an additional five staff will travel in the coming days to provide psychosocial support. The TRCS health promotion officer, who was part of the initial team, has been raising awareness on hygiene within the communities.

Palau Red Cross and Solomon Islands Red Cross have launched appeals to support the TRCS response.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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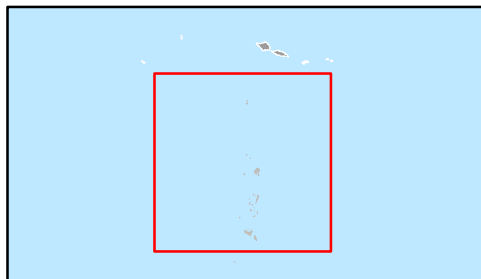
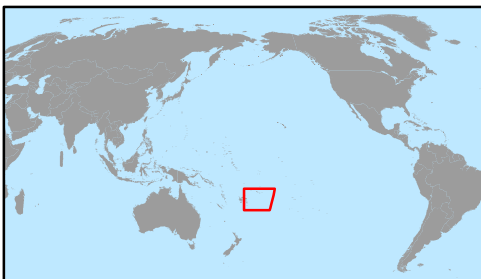
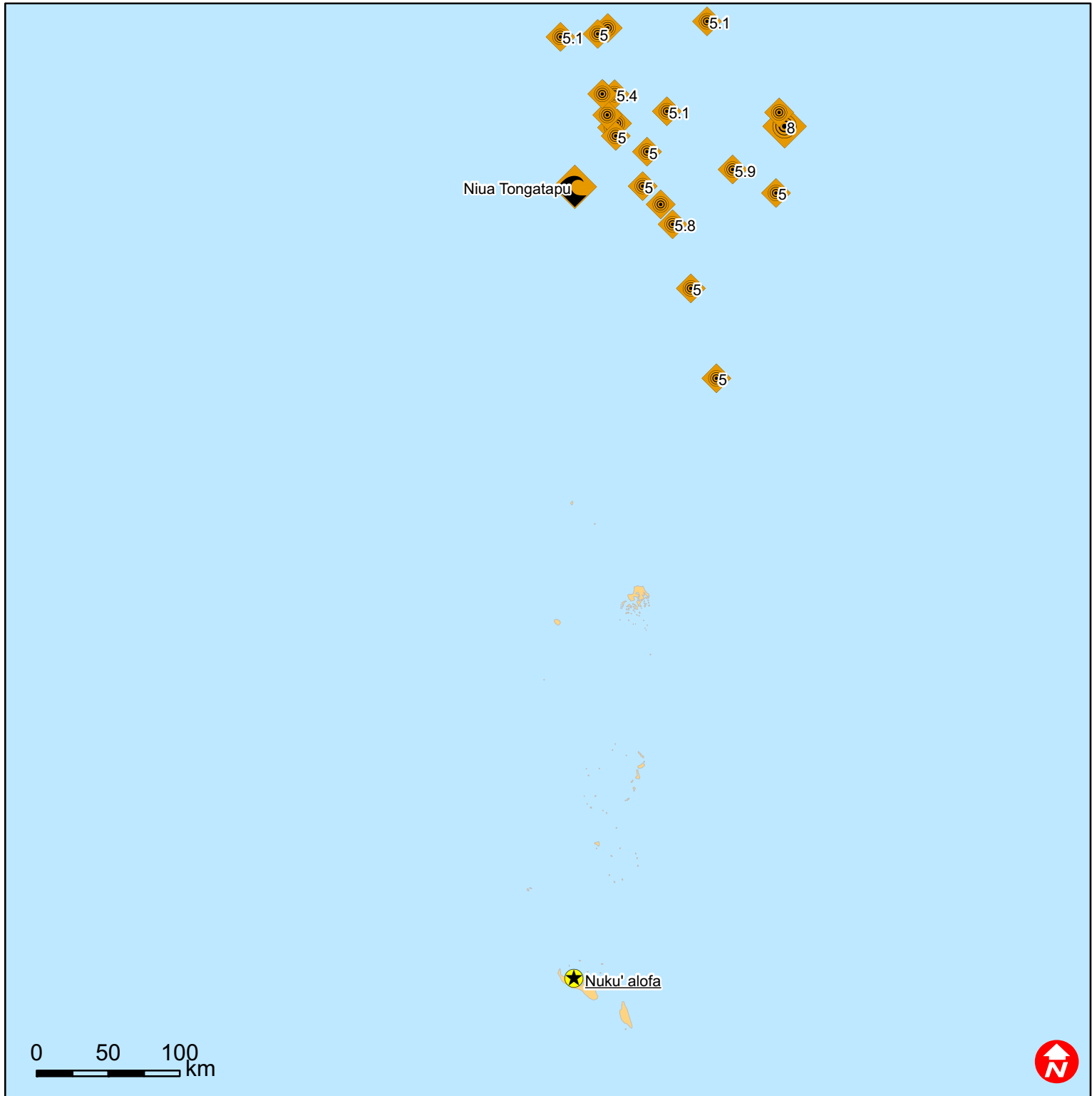
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[<map below; click here to return to the title page or contact information](#)




Tonga: Tsunami




Earthquakes

Magnitude

 Between 5 and 7.9

 8 and more

 Area affected by tsunami