

Information bulletin



Tonga: Maritime Accident

Information bulletin n° 2
GLIDE no. **AC-2009-000151-TON**
21 August 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 will, however, accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected population.

Tonga Red Cross continues to provide support to those affected by a maritime accident that took place at 1.30am on 6 August, when a boat, the MV Princess Ashika, sank. The boat was travelling from Nuku'alofa to Ha'afeva in the Ha'apai Islands group when it went down at approximately 20.24 S and 174.16 W northwest of Nuku'alofa. Final figures indicate that 129 people were on board the ship when it sank with 54 confirmed survivors, 2 dead and 73 missing, presumed drowned. Tonga Red Cross launched its relief efforts by providing immediate relief to the 54 people rescued from the accident and providing services to assist them in making contact with family members. In addition, the Australian government has recently provided AUD 100,000 to Tonga Red Cross to restock relief supplies and provide psycho-social support and counselling to those affected by the accident.

<click [here](#) for detailed contact information, or [here](#) for a map which shows the location of the incident>

The Situation

The MV Princess Ashika was travelling from Nuku'alofa to Ha'afeva when the boat sank at approximately 1.00am on 6 August, carrying 86 passengers and 43 crew members on board.

Maritime New Zealand's Rescue Coordination Centre (NZRCC) received a distress beacon alert from the vessel and immediately launched a search. NZRCC are cooperating closely with the Tongan Navy in the search and rescue efforts. The most recent information indicates that of the 129 people on board the ship there were 54 survivors, 2 dead and 73 missing, presumed drowned.

Rescue teams continued to work tirelessly in an effort to locate further survivors from the accident. A team from the New Zealand Navy have been able to identify the ship at a depth of 120m but expert dive teams have been unable to reach the ship. Advice provided by the New Zealand government suggests that the cost of retrieving bodies from the ship would be approximately 25 million dollars.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) initially launched a response through their branch in Ha'apai. Up to 20 volunteers worked closely with the Tongan Police Force to respond to the immediate needs of the 54 survivors who were evacuated to a church building in Panagai Ha'apai. This included the distribution of food, drinks and blankets. TRCS has also set up a Restoring Family Links unit operating around the clock to assist members of the Tongan community to locate family members that are thought to have been involved in the accident.

The Australian government donated AUD 100,000 to the TRCS to provide psycho-social support to those affected by the accident, particularly to individuals whose family members are suspected to be among those missing from the ship. It is expected that the provision of these services will commence on Friday with technical support from the Australian Red Cross. A counselling and psychological expert will arrive on 21 August to conduct psychosocial support training to TRCS staff and volunteers. TRCS hopes that the training will enable the national society to increase its support to those affected by the disaster.

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

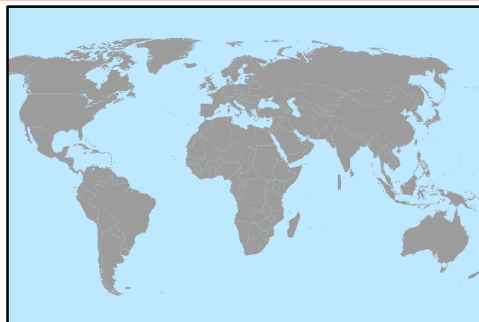
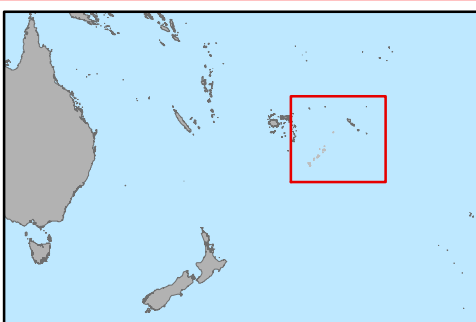
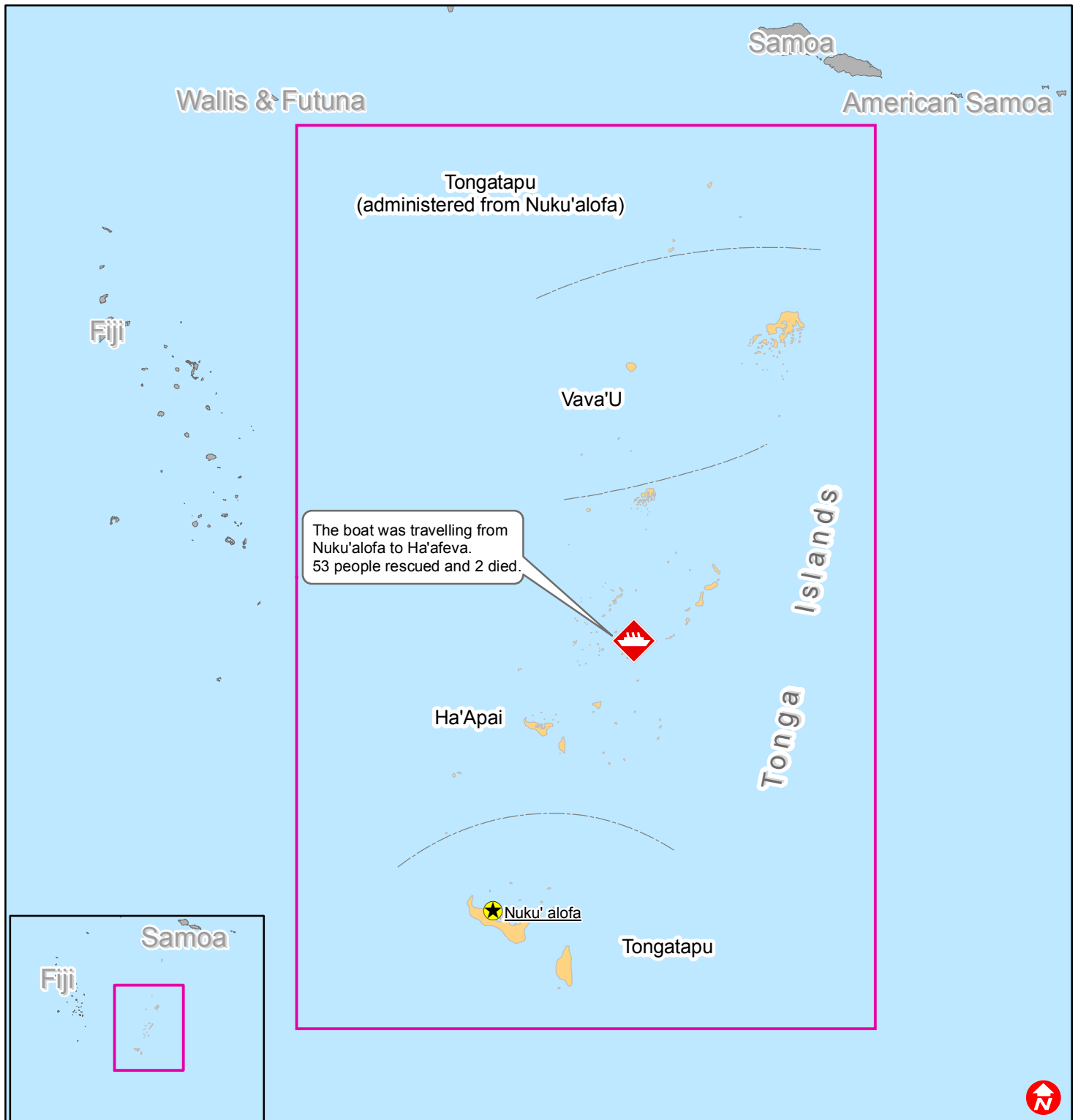
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[<map below; click here to return to the title page>](#)



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