

Information Bulletin n° 4
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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Tuvalu Red Cross Society with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that extended external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time. The current partners of Tuvalu Red Cross in the Pacific will support as required.

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Tuvalu Red Cross Society (TRCS) community-based health and first aid (CBHFA) officer and two volunteers making puppets from the Hygiene promotion box as part of a joint workshop with the Ministry of Education. Photo cred: TRCS

The situation

The state of emergency declared on the 28 September might be extended for another three to six months. The decision is still pending approval from the Government of Tuvalu.

Tuvalu Government continues to work closely with its partners to get their desalination plants working and new ones in place as needed. There have been some relief with the arrival of a large shipment of water to Funafuti and frequent rains over the last week. A survey on the government storage capacity and household capacity has been completed and utilized to inform decision making on the water rationing, water plants positioning and usage. New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) extraction is in progress and will be completed by Monday, 7 November. The outer island assessment has been completed and there is no immediate emergency in any of the islands. Regional partners are closely working with Tuvalu representatives to discuss the mid to long term water storage and integrated resource management issues in Tuvalu and prioritize the support to the outer islands.

Situation in Funafuti:

- Water rationing on Funafuti commenced on the 29 September via seven distribution points. Water rationing continues and has been increased to 60 litres per household on 23 October. An extra bucket is allocated for babies, nursing mothers and the elderly. This is meeting approximately 66 per cent of the minimum sphere standard of 15 litres/day. Recently, it is reported that there has been a reduced number of people accessing the distribution points due to the recent rain showers over the last few weeks.

- The analysis from the most recent government and island council storage facilities showed that there are now 2.7 million litres of water stored with the recent rain, water produced from the desalination plants and the water shipment.
- A repeat household tank sounding was conducted by the Public Works Department (PWD) on the week of 31 October with preliminary findings revealing that overall Funafuti household tanks capacity were half full. There were a small number of houses which remain vulnerable, with completely empty rainwater tanks and are totally dependent on water distribution.
- A shipment of water to Funafuti arrived on 31 October with 450,000 litres of water that has been put into government storage. A further shipment of 6,00,000 litres of water is expected around 10 November.
- The Ministry of Health records that there are no waterborne disease outbreaks on Funafuti.
- Preschools have reopened on the 24 October. The school term will finish one week early this year, finishing on the week of 14 November.

Situation in outer islands:

- The joint outer-island multi-sectoral assessment (health, water and sanitation, and agriculture) team in the northern outer islands completed its visits and returned to Funafuti on 6 November. Initial verbal feedback at the interagency meetings show that the communities on the outer islands are very resilient and managing with limited resources. There has been no increased incidence of waterborne or water scarcity diseases in any of the outer islands. Over 80 per cent of households answered that they boil their water and 90 per cent wash their hands at critical times. The impact to date on the agriculture and food security is minor to moderate with limited impacts on crops such as coconut, breadfruit, pawpaw and banana. On two islands, Nanumaga and Niuto, 80 per cent of Pulakaplants were severely stressed. Home gardens were also affected due to the heat and lack of water. Water security remains a concern with all six islands continuing with rationing ranging from 5 litres/per five people on Vaitupu to 60 litres per five people per day on Nanumaga. It was noted that a large number of buildings throughout the islands had inefficient rainwater harvesting systems. Communal and household storage facilities were measured and currently a report is being written that will recommend the short, medium and long term priorities and subsequent action.
- The desalination plant on Nanumaga is now operational after repairs from PWD on the outer island visit.
- Nukulaelae Island has been helped by the two emergency desalination plants supported by New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC) since early October. On 2 November, the Government of Tuvalu transported and set up one of its 8,000-litre plant on Nukulaelae. It is planned that this will replace the TRCS's plants which will both be recovered to Funafuti by early December.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Funafuti

- The TRCS continues to man a water distribution site which has distributed water between 24 October – 6 November with a total of 47,686 litres, with a range of 26 - 74 households accessing the point each day. It is noted that attendance at distribution points has reduced due to rainfall.
- Desalination theoretical training sessions have been conducted to interested volunteers by the relief delegate over the previous two weeks to ensure they understand the science behind the operation of the machine.
- A simplified version of the desalination operating manual has been prepared by the relief delegate and will be translated for use in the near future.
- The relief delegate has prepared a short report on the construction issues of TRCS building. This will be shared with partners for future resourcing.
- Follow-up monitoring visits to the three schools (2 primary and 1 high school) after the distribution of hygiene equipment in the previous weeks showed that all schools had established suitable hand washing stations outside their classrooms and toilets. Having sufficient water for flushing of toilets was initially problematic but now due to the distribution of well water by the island council and the rain in the last weeks, this issue has been largely solved. Monitoring visits will continue until the end of the term.
- The arrival of an additional 45 boxes of 500 ml bottles of hand sanitizer will be used for secondary and tertiary institutions, health clinics and other public facilities. A distribution plan will be developed in coordination with the Ministry of Health taking into consideration outer island assessment report.
- On 5-6 October, TRCS's two staff, 6 volunteers and the relief delegate conducted a short assessment on Funafala, an islet south of Funafuti where approximately 18 people live. The assessment showed that residents of Funafala are managing well and have adequate supply of water. TRCS is coordinating with Ministry of Health in replenishment and training on the basic medical kit.

- TRCS has conducted a joint preschool assessment on the week of 24 October with the Ministry of Education to review the handwashing, water supply and latrine facilities. Recommendations have been made to the Acting Director of Education. This information has been shared with partners including Ministry of Health and at the daily interagency coordination meeting.
- MOH, MOE and TRCS conducted a three-day puppet making workshop attended by 36 Funafuti preschool teachers and TRCS staff and volunteers. Materials from the hygiene promotion kit were utilized to make the puppets. The preschool assessment findings were presented by the MOE and TRCS and the school nurse discussed the key messages utilized as part of the operation safe water campaign. The workshop participants produced hand puppets, developed scripts and on the final day, each preschool and TRCS presented their puppet show. The preschool teachers will perform these shows to the preschool children.
- Follow-up pre-school joint visits with MOE are now being conducted to see if the puppet shows have been performed to the children and to review hand washing facilities. Each preschool has been tasked by the Ministry of Education to make tippy taps (portable handwashing facility) for their students out of straws and used water bottles. TRCS will distribute soap and toilet cleaning equipment to each pre-school during these visits.
- TRCS staff and volunteers have had two volunteer evenings. On the first evening, 20 volunteers attended. The focus was on dissemination of information on the Red Cross movement. The following week, eight volunteers participated in the development of the drought awareness IEC material using the Ministry of Health operation water safety messaging. This material will be sent to Suva for further design and layout.
- TRCS attends the daily interagency coordination meeting chaired by the Government of Tuvalu which includes Government departments and external agencies, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZMFAT), New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). This is a forum for information sharing, coordination of humanitarian assistance and where decisions are either made or tabled for other government meetings. TRCS is a permanent member of the smaller government National Disaster Taskforce and the National Disaster Committee which meets regularly.
- NZDF has gifted 40 x 200 litre drums and 5 x 1000 litre water cubes to TRCS. These containers will be used for emergency transportation of water to affected islands as needed in the future.

Nukulaelae and Outer Island

- The two deployed desalinization plants run by TRCS continue to function to near capacity of 4,000 litre/day. Daily written reports from Nukulaelae have shown that a total of 53,463 (20 October - 3 November) litres of water has been produced. A total of 83,823 litres has been produced since reports were kept as of 12 October.
- Rationing of water continues with the amount distributed dependent on the desalination output and current reserves. The distribution is managed by the island disaster committee. The island council is building a reserve on the island.
- On 2 November the NZRC relief delegate and two volunteers visited Nukulaelae to recover the smaller desalination unit back to Funafuti. This was in part a training exercise as the volunteers learned how to clean and shut down the plant for storage. The volunteers will be expected to recover the larger unit back to Funafuti in early December.
- The desalination plants are operated by three team leaders and approximately 10 assistants. There are three volunteers participating in the operation of the plant and one is a team leader. The units are running 24 hours a day with rostered shifts.
- Simple operating procedures for desalination plants and maintenance schedules have been developed, translated into local languages and printed for use in both units.
- There were no further reported of cases of diarrhoea or respiratory illness since the initial outbreak of six cases of diarrhoea.
- Distribution of 20 litres of sea gel and 48 bottles of 500mls hand sanitizer were distributed to the islands' nurse. The sea gel can be used for children with skin sores who are currently bathing in the sea.
- An assessment on Nuilakita, the most southern island in Tuvalu by TRCS volunteers and the relief delegate found that the island where approximately 50 people live is managing with current water resource, but would benefit from a few extra water tanks and additional guttering of the school. Discussion with the nurse revealed that there has been no increase in the incidence of waterborne diseases.
- Satellite refresher training has been completed in all the outer islands including Nuilakita.

- TRCS's two volunteers who participated in the outer island assessment are currently compiling a report which includes request from the branches.

Red Cross partners' support

- The Funafuti-based NZRC relief delegate continues to provide valuable support to TRCS and has been extended until 8 November.
 - IFRC community health delegate arrived on 11 October to provide support in the short to medium term response planning and is expected to stay until 17 November.
 - IFRC regional office continues to assist TRCS in mobilizing emergency items, information sharing and coordination among partners.
 - TRCS's six-month plan of action has been completed and shared with Red Cross partners. Discussions will be ongoing over the next week to coordinate resources to support TRCS.
 - TRCS has agreed to a multi-skilled delegate presence over a three to five-month period to support with the management of the response plan.
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Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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All IFRC 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 the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
 2. Enable healthy and safe living.
 3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
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