



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**COOK ISLANDS  
TROPICAL CYCLONES  
DREF REVIEW**

**(17th to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2011)**

**REPORT DRAFT**

**By:** Daniel Bolanos Gonzalez (DMU IFRC Operations Coordinator)  
Ysabeau Rycx (IFRC Pacific Disaster Management Coordinator)

# Table of contents

- 1. Background.....4
- 2. Review process.....4
  - 2.1 Methodology .....4
  - 2.2 Preliminary review of secondary information .....5
  - 2.3 Field review.....5
  - 2.4 Lesson Learned Workshop .....5
- 3. Findings .....6
  - 3.1 From field visit and survey.....6
    - 3.1.1 Centralisation of decision making:.....6
    - 3.1.2 . Difficulties of beneficiaries identification .....6
    - 3.1.3 Logistic constraints .....7
    - 3.1.4 Beneficiaries satisfaction, communication gaps .....7
  - 3.2 Findings from interviews and HQ (staff and volunteers) .....9
    - 3.2.1 Emergency Management Cook Islands.....9
    - 3.2.2 Prime minister CEO approach.....9
    - 3.2.3 Findings and work done by HQ to be better prepared .....9
- 4. Recommendations. ....10
  - 4.1 CIRC DM plans and training.....10
  - 4.2 Emergency funds .....10
  - 4.3 Contingency planning.....10
  - 4.4 Review the CIRC Volunteer Management.....10
  - 4.5 Branch trainings .....11
- 5. Conclusions .....11

## **SUMMARY OF DREF REVIEW**

### **KEY FINDINGS**

During the Tropical Cyclone Pat (TC Pat) emergency response, Cook Island Red Cross (CIRC) staff and volunteers were the first one on the ground for emergency assessment and distribution. The recognition of the beneficiaries and all the stakeholders in this key role in response has been well expressed during this review.

However CIRC faced some challenges as listed below:

- Coordination issues with other stakeholders
- Problem of beneficiaries' identification
- Logistic constraints and challenges
- Gaps in communication with beneficiaries
- Challenges in staff and volunteer management during an emergency
- Lack of exit strategy (from emergency response to long-term support)

CIRC did some internal evaluation of their response just after the emergency and based on this learning, CIRC conducted some activities to address these challenges:

- Pacific Disaster Response Team training
- Hosted Regional Disaster Response Team training
- Logistic training
- Evaluation of the existing stocks and replenishment plans

### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations have been discussed during the Lessons Learned Workshop and could be synthesised as follows:

- Review disaster management and training plans
- Secure emergency buffer funds
- Formalise contingency planning process
- Review of volunteer management process
- Set up branch-training plan

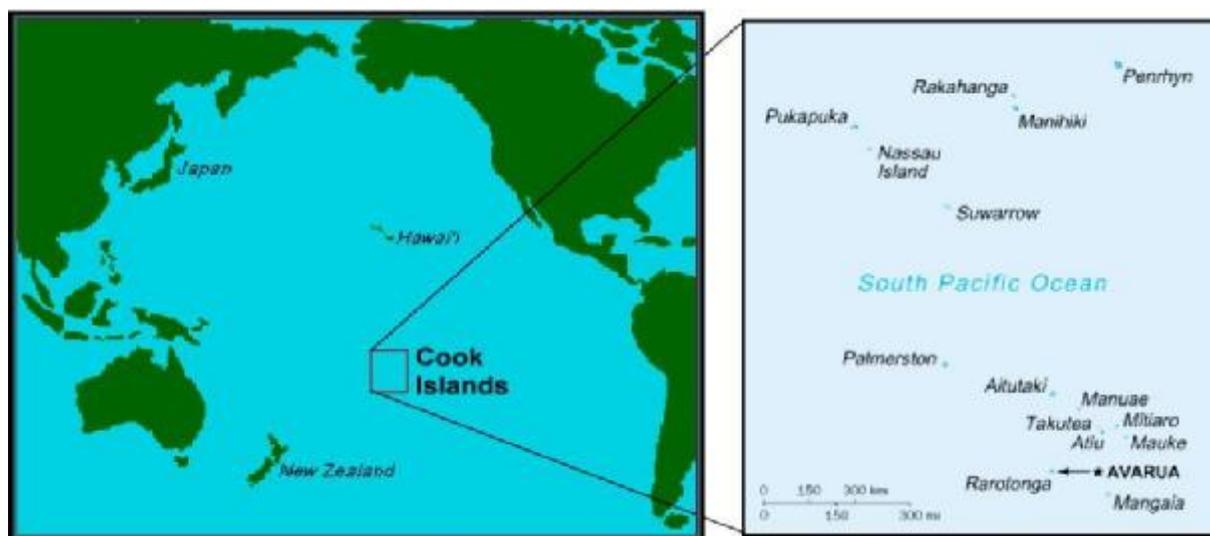
## 1.BACKGROUND

Following three tropical cyclones in the Cook Islands, including TC Pat (category 3) on 10 February 2010 in Aitutaki, the International Federation launched a DREF for CHF 150,000 to support CIRC in their response operation, after the Cook Islands government declared a state of disaster for Aitutaki. The force of the cyclone was the most powerful ever experienced by residents of Aitutaki. The CIRC deployed the first team (emergency Response Team/ERT) from the main land of Rarotonga on 11 February followed by the second team on 12 February and it engaged with the branch of Aitutaki to conduct the initial assessment that led to the distribution of relief supplies to meet the humanitarian needs of the people.

CHF 150,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 12 February (CIRC received the funds on 16 February) to support the National Society in delivering assistance to some 1,671 beneficiaries and to replenish disaster preparedness stocks.

The most vulnerable people received the most urgent needs in shelter (tarpaulins/800 ropes with tents), WATSAN (over 100,000 litres were provided), food and PSP support.

- **Location of Aitutaki:**



## 2.REVIEW PROCESS

### 2.1 Methodology

The review has been conducted adopting the following methodology:

- Preliminary review of second information.
- Semi-structured interviews, key interviews (CIRC SG and DMO, Secretary of CIRC Aitutaki Branch, formal mayor of Aitutaki, EMCI Director, CEO Prime Minister, etc).
- Observation in the affected areas, surveys (at all levels with the people involved in the response operation: CIRC HQ, CIRC Aitutaki branch, communities, volunteers) and interaction with the CIRC volunteers and communities.

- Group interviews were conducted with some community representatives in Aitutaki and authorities representatives (Police, Disability Department, Air Rarotonga, Telecom, Administration, Ministry of Health, etc).
- A briefing was organized with the CIRC volunteers in Aitutaki operation who distributed and conducted household surveys on the island. The surveys comprised of three different categories: 1) quality, relevance and accountability; 2) effectiveness and efficiency of management; and 3) changes in the CIRC as a consequence of the DREF operation.
- Lessons-Learned Workshop: 19 people attended this two-day workshop; including all CIRC HQ Program Managers/officers, the IFRC WATSAN delegates and representatives from Aitutaki and outer islands.

## **2.2 Preliminary review of secondary information**

Before conducting a Lessons Learned Workshop, reports were collected and reviewed. Below is a list of reports reviewed:

- CIRC rapid initial assessment report
- CIRC profile
- IACP workshop for humanitarian assistance in Cook Islands
- CIRC Program Staff structure
- Summary of opportunities arising from the regional CP process for CIRC
- Basic Logistics training report
- CIRC PSP program for cyclone Pat
- CIRC strategic plan, tropical Cyclones DREF operation,
- Tropical Cyclones operations updates (numbers 1, 2 and final report),
- List of emergency stock in Aitutaki).

## **2.3 Field review**

Prior to the workshop, two days of data collection were organized in Aitutaki as listed in the agenda below:

- Meeting with CIRC branch staffs and volunteers
- Meetings with authorities (Telecom, Administration, Air Rarotonga, Ministry of Health, Disability Department, Women association representative, Youth representatives, etc),
- Visit to the affected areas
- Group interview with community representatives, CIRC branch volunteers and beneficiaries
- Household surveys conducted by CIRC volunteers
- Meeting with the formal mayor (head of operations during the response to TC Pat).

## **2.4 Lesson Learned Workshop**

A Lessons Learned Workshop was organized in Rarotonga with the participation of 19 people from Rarotonga, Aitutaki and the Outer Islands, CIRC HQ staff, board representatives, AusRC and Federation representatives.

This workshop gave the opportunity to share experience from different perspectives (branch and HQ), to identify the main challenges, what have been done to address them and what have yet to be done.



The following table is a summary of the workshop agenda:

DAY 1	DAY 2
1.Presentation of workshop, participants, methodology/objectives. 2.Overview of the DREF: •HQ perspectives •Branch perspectives •Technical aspects (Assessment, distribution, procurement, water and sanitation) 3.Presentation of DREF field review findings 4.Group work: identifying key challenges 5.Group work: key recommendations 6.Further discussions: •Coordination •Communication, •Support needed by CIRC in emergency	1.SWOT analysis of CIRC readiness for emergency response 2.Group work on CIRC assessment: •Challenges •Recommendations 3.Group work on CIRC capacities and needs: •Prepositioned stocks/logistic •Admin and Finance •Communication 4.Group work on community approach: •Beneficiaries involvement •Early warning (existing and gaps) 5.Plan of action

### 3.FINDINGS

#### 3.1 From field visits and surveys

##### 3.1.1 Centralisation of decision making:

In general, the coordination in Aitutaki was quite positive. Coordination meetings were organized regularly in Aitutaki. However, according to the people who were interviewed, a proper reporting system in place or record of the meetings were lacking. There seemed to be a disconnection between the coordination mechanism at national level in Rarotonga and Aitutaki. This was apparent during the Recovery Phase, where decisions were made by the Ministry of Infrastructures and messages were not disseminated to Aitutaki. The process of this phase was slowed down as a result.

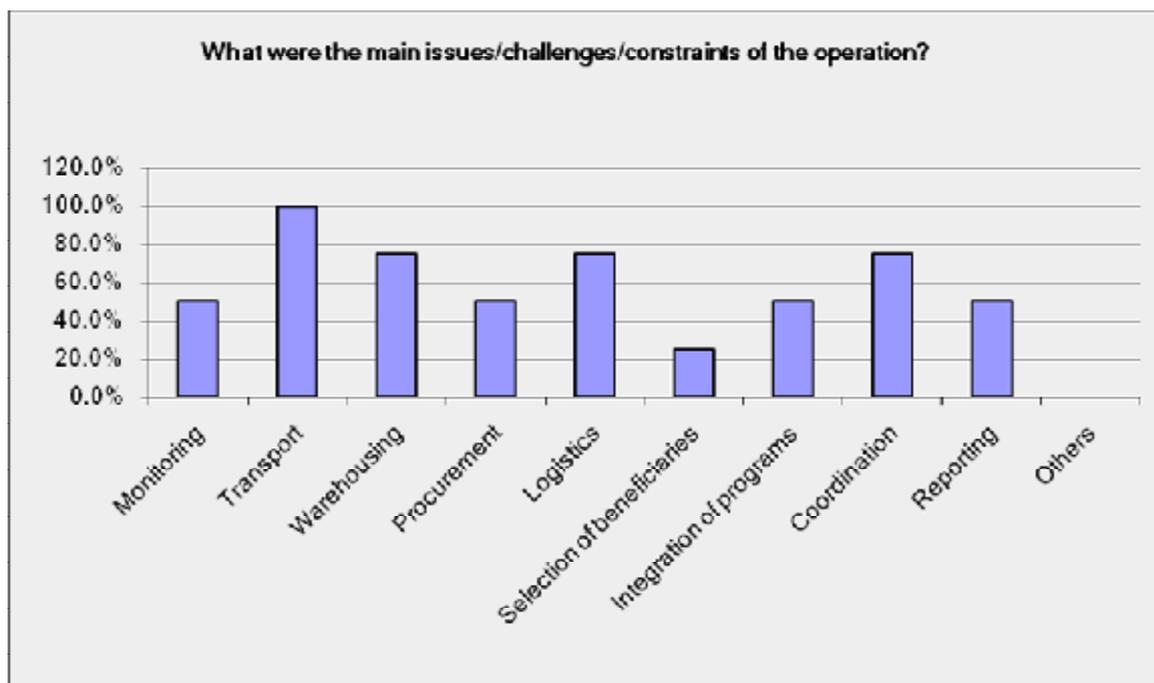
##### 3.1.2 Difficulties of beneficiaries identification



Example of temporary shelter still in use while waiting for permanent shelter to be completed

Most of the people agreed that the selection of beneficiaries and identification of needs were quite challenging. However, the planned operation through the DREF was in line with the needs of the communities that were affected by the cyclone (except shelter that was provided by the government). Some complaints were made by beneficiaries, as one year after the cyclone Pat, some families were still living in tents.

### 3.1.3 Logistic constraints



Another concern expressed during the interviews was regarding logistics (including transport of relief items, warehousing and procurement). These concerns have also been expressed at national level. Bringing the items on time to Aitutaki after the cyclone was quite challenging. Distributions were done following the arrival of non-food items to the island.

#### 3.1.4 Beneficiaries satisfaction, communication gaps

Regarding the distribution of relief items, the beneficiaries in general were satisfied with the provided services.

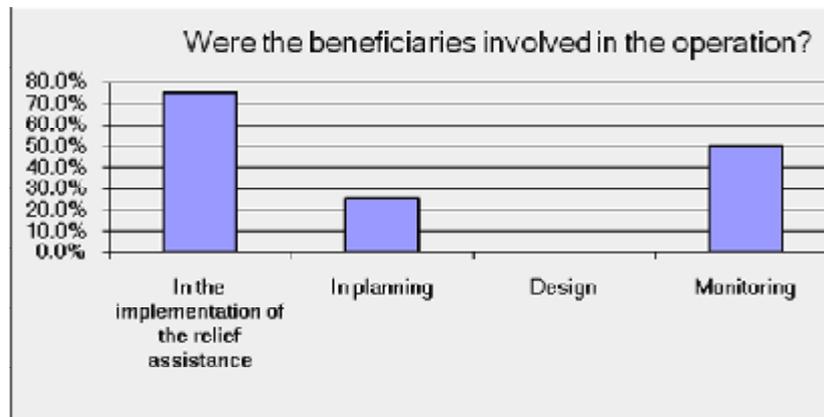
Are you satisfied with the service you received from CIRC staff and volunteers?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Non satisfied	20.9%	9
Very unsatisfied	18.6%	8
Very satisfied	7.0%	3
Satisfied	53.5%	23
Explain why:		6
answered question		43
skipped question		4

Around 39% of the interviewed people were not satisfied with the CIRC, because the community had thought that the Red Cross (RC) was also responsible for the reconstruction of the houses. This clearly identified a lack of communication to beneficiaries about the CIRC role in response to the cyclone Pat. The beneficiaries were not very involved in the planning and designing of the CIRC intervention in Aitutaki (see graphic below). By including them, it would have avoided the communication gaps in their understanding of CIRC role and activities during this response operation.

The majority of the interviewed people expressed that they waited between 2 to 6 days to receive the first contact from CIRC after being hit by the cyclone, which was reasonable.

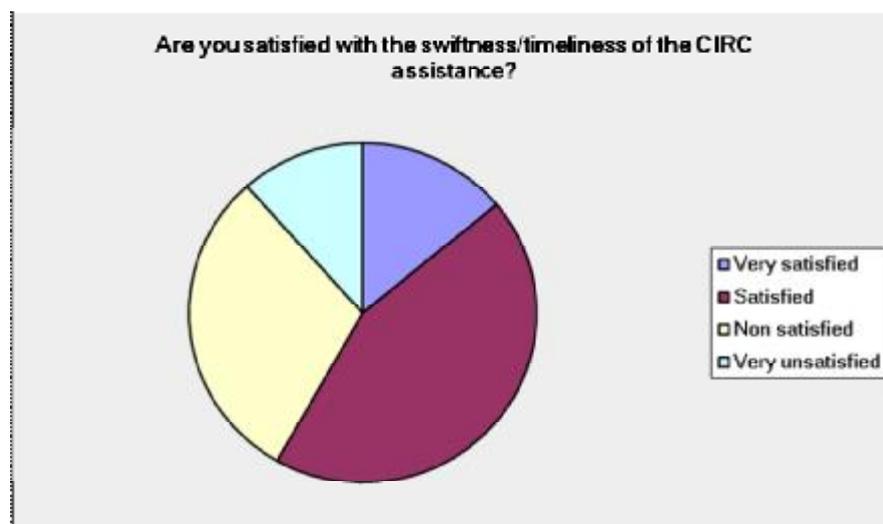
Most of the beneficiaries were satisfied with the swiftness/timeliness of National Society assistance.

How long did you have to wait before receiving CIRC first contact?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Hours	4.3%	2
One day	8.5%	4
Between 2 and 6 days	48.9%	23
One week	12.8%	6
More than one week	25.5%	12
answered question		47
skipped question		0



The integration of program areas, CBHFA, HIV/YPE, DM, disability, finances during the emergency has been a success.

This DREF operation has contributed in covering the costs for deployment of volunteers and staff to Aitutaki and to run the operation, in coordination with the support received from NZRC and AusRC and NZHC. This has been much appreciated by the CIRC and partners.



The local authorities also expressed that more disaster preparedness activities (including more practical EWS) should be carried out in Aitutaki, but it does not seem that this preparedness is being done by any of the local authorities.

### **3.2 Findings from interviews and HQ (staff and volunteers)**

#### **3.2.1 Emergency Management Cook Islands (EMCI)**

Aitutaki response was the first one for the actual EMCI members. They noticed that the early warning system was quite slow. The population did not take it seriously as previously there were several warnings (at least twice) without any real consequences. They explained that CIRC volunteers were the first one on the ground for assessment and assistance delivery. However the volunteers went directly into a detailed assessment which slowed down the process of gathering and sharing information.

The EMCI recognised that the action points established during the IACP workshop last August have not been followed, and different partners have been trying to implement the plan now. This shows that there is not enough preparedness measures in place for the current cyclone season.

#### **3.2.2 Prime minister CEO approach**

The Prime minister CEO had a good understanding of CIRC role in emergency and what they did in the response for cyclone Pat. The working relationship of CIRC and the local and national authorities was strong and CIRC was recognised for their work. They still work with CIRC for preparedness activities.

Prime minister CEO recognised that the actions outlined in the National Disaster Management Plan was too generic and that the organisations are not clear enough on their roles and responsibilities during emergencies (mainly because of turn over). For example, local government should take the lead in emergency response and their representatives should be trained to endorse it.

Prime minister CEO is currently advising the Prime Minister to reinforce Cook Islands' preparation and capacity to face disasters. However he raised the fact that there is a lack of understanding of UN cluster system. He also stated that there is a lot of work to do under shelter management.

#### **3.2.3 Findings and work done by HQ to be better prepared**

Following the different presentations for the emergency response done from branch and HQ perspectives, the workshop mainly focused on challenges and ways to address them. The main challenges can be listed as follows:

- Ensuring quick assessment data to be collected for proposal in a short period of time.
- As CIRC volunteers did some assessments with government representatives and were sometimes looking at house damages to report to government, expectations were raised among beneficiaries that it was CIRC's role to do the house repairs.
- Beneficiaries' identification criteria which led to difficulties in addressing complaints.
- Logistic challenges (accurate registration of goods received by HQ and discrepancies in types of goods delivered due to supply issues).
- Volunteer management (roles/responsibilities, working hours, protective equipment etc).
- Difficulties in staff mobilisation due to their other responsibilities.
- Gaps of support to communities between emergency response support and re-building of houses (almost one-year period).
- Although there was direct coordination with the local authorities, there seemed to have been a gap between the information given to them and the one received by the communities (which mainly explained the majority of issues raised by beneficiaries).

CIRC already did some preparation work to increase their capacities to respond to people's needs in emergencies. The Pacific Disaster Response Team and logistic trainings done in 2010 addressed these needs. CIRC has also prepositioned supplies but has yet to finalise the stock list for restocking (purpose).

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The participants in the Lessons Learned Workshop prioritized the recommendations after much discussion. It is important to address them as there will be an important expectation for CIRC to be at the front line in the next emergency response. In order to meet this expectation CIRC needs to be more prepared and clear about their role and responsibilities.

### **4.1 CIRC DM plans and training**

The CIRC DM Plan 2011 needs to be finalised and key trainings for 2011-2012 to be identified:

- Update the CIRC DM Plan in line with CIRC priorities and capacities (based on CIRC global strategy).
- Identify key trainings and trainees with a clear time frame.
- Share the plan with internal and external partners to identify opportunities.

### **4.2 Emergency funds**

The review of the DREF operation clearly showed that the buffer funds available at HQ level had played a crucial role in the effectiveness of the emergency assessment team deployment. Such funding needs to be secure to ensure consistency in response. A replenishment system should be in place to make these funds available at all time. This should be part of the contingency planning process and should be stipulated in the document.

### **4.3 Contingency planning**

CIRC recognised that initiating a new contingency planning (CP) process (CIRC role, support requirements, training requirements, resources required, agreements, pre-positioning, etc) will help them to keep a better track in view of emergency responses. In 2004, IFRC helped CIRC with a CP process; however, the plan developed was not an easy tool to use by CIRC, so it was not really used since.

This work will include the following activities:

- Formalize the process between CIRC and partners
- Conduct a CP process
- Review existing CP tools (check list, prepositioning stocks lists to be updated...)
- Finalize a CP
- Review CIRC disaster plan

### **4.4 Review the CIRC Volunteer Management**

Volunteer management was challenging during the emergency response. The review showed several gaps and this should be addressed to allow better volunteer support and mobilisation. This includes activities as per follows:

- Review of the volunteer database
- Conduct induction training
- Insurance
- Volunteer equipment

#### 4.5 **Branch trainings**

As the branch volunteers are usually the first on the ground, they would need to have proper training on top or providing them refresher courses. The planning for the training had already commenced in some northern islands but currently, it still needs to be finalised. This will include the activities below:

- Review CIRC assessment forms and train volunteers to use them
- ERT training (including updated assessment and communication training)

### **5.CONCLUSIONS**

The review has been quite positive and it has been really good to have conducted some surveys in Aitutaki level and see the positive impact of the operation in the communities and to have identified some gaps from the operation.

However, CIRC could strengthen the disaster response capacities both at branch and at national level (emergency funds, ERT, logistics, warehousing and procurement, etc). On the other side, the beneficiary communications should be considered as one of the main gaps of the operation. Dissemination of RC role and its principles as well as more orientation and training for CIRC volunteers are recommended.

Development of contingency planning and MoU with main partners may help CIRC to improve its coordination with the existing mechanisms and partnerships in the Cook Islands.

In preparation to disasters, CIRC could reinforce their preparedness actions (prepositioning of stock, establishment of emergency funds, training, etc) in order to improve the support to the most vulnerable people affected by those disasters.

As for the Lessons Learned Workshop, at least two days are necessary to enable more discussions and analysis of a disaster operation to take place.

Results of workshop evaluation:

<b>The Workshop:</b>	<b>Entirely/ Excellent</b>	<b>Very much</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Partly /not so much</b>	<b>Poor/ not at all</b>	<b>No. of responders</b>
Whether the workshop met their objectives	7	4	1			12
Whether the workshop met their expectation	5	6	1			12
Whether the workshop will help CIRC be more effective when involve in emergency response	9	2				12
Information about the DREF workshop	8	3	1			12
Methodology	10	2				12
Teamwork of organisers, facilitators	11	1				12
Suitability of facilities (meeting area, etc)	7	4	1			12
Food and refreshments	12					12