



TONGA

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 2.4M**

Appeal number **MAATO001**

In support of the Tonga Red Cross Society



3

National Society branches



18

National Society staff



80

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



17,000

Ongoing emergency operations

IFRC network multiyear focus

Emergency response

- Volcanos and tsunami

Longer term needs

- Disaster risk reduction
- Climate change adaptation

Capacity development

- Disaster management
 - Communications
- Digital transformation
- Institutional strengthening

Key country data

Population **106,000**

INFORM Severity rating **low**

Long-term Climate Risk Index **77**

Human Development Index rank **91**

Population below poverty level **22.5%**

Hazards



Cyclones



Volcanos



Earthquakes



Tsunami

Funding requirements

Total 2.4M CHF

Through the IFRC

2.4M CHF

IFRC Breakdown

2.4M CHF

Ongoing emergency operations

Ongoing emergencies

MDRTO002

Tonga Volcano and Tsunami
volcano and tsunami

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross*

Australian Red Cross

British Red Cross*

The Canadian Red Cross Society*

Red Cross Society of China*

Danish Red Cross

French Red Cross

Japanese Red Cross Society*

The Republic of Korea National Red Cross*

Latvian Red Cross*

Red Cross of Monaco*

New Zealand Red Cross

Singapore Red Cross Society*

Tuvalu Red Cross Society



NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Tonga Red Cross Society was established as an auxiliary to the Government of Tonga by an Act of Parliament in 1981. The Government's National Disaster Plan recognizes the National Society as a provider of relief and recovery assistance in emergency and recovery contexts.

The Tonga Red Cross is a relatively small and young National Society, with a core staff of 18 people and 80 volunteers. However, it plays a critical role in civil society; it enhances Tonga's capacity to increase resilience, reduce risks and respond to crises. Moreover, it is represented on Tonga's National Emergency Management Committee, the leading coordination body for disaster response in Tonga. The National Society stores pre-positioned items at its national headquarters and in 14 other locations spread across the island groups that compose the country. The National Society also has a longstanding first aid programme. This includes the provision of commercial first aid, which is offered to businesses and government departments. In 2020, approximately 200 participants completed first aid training with the Tonga Red Cross.

In 2022, a major undersea volcanic eruption dominated the National Society's programming, as it resulted in an ash cloud, ash fall and a tsunami event. Responding to this disaster will continue to be a priority in 2023 and beyond. However, the Tonga Red Cross needs to be

prepared for future crises and expand its longer-term vision to combat the effects of climate change on the archipelago.

The National Society is headquartered on the island of Tongatapu, with branches on Ha'apai islands, 'Eua and Vava'u. Most of the volunteers are based in Tongatapu. Following an engineering assessment of the national headquarters building, which identified safety concerns, some of the National Society team have been operating out of a container office on the headquarters grounds. A priority for the National Society is replacing the national headquarters building and completing repairs on other National Society sites.

The Tonga Red Cross operates a school for children living with disabilities, the Ofa Tui Amanaki (OTA) Centre, on the same premises as the national headquarters. The school has been closed since the volcanic eruption, the tsunami and later the COVID-19 outbreak; however, it is likely that it will be operational again in 2023. Activities that support people living with disabilities – including the students, school alumni and others – are a priority for the National Society.

The National Society has previously led the Pacific Red Cross Protection, Gender and Inclusion Network, and it has a keen interest in developing its digital capabilities.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

The Kingdom of Tonga, located in the Polynesian region of the Pacific Ocean, comprises approximately 170 islands, 36 of which are inhabited. Of the total population of about 100,000 people, 74 per cent are located in Tongatapu and 14 per cent are in Vava'u. Eighty-four per cent of Tonga's population live within 1km of the coast; as such, the majority of the population are extremely vulnerable to natural hazards and the effects of climate change.

Tonga has been a constitutional monarchy since 1845, and the royal family plays an active role in the kingdom. The Chair of Tonga Red Cross is a member of the royal family. Members of Parliament are elected, and the King appoints a prime minister from the elected members.

Although Tonga came under British protection in 1900, it has never lost its indigenous governance. These factors contribute to a strong national and cultural identity.

Parliamentary elections were conducted in 2021. As of 13 May 2022, four elected members were unseated after being found guilty of attempting to bribe voters ahead of the 2021 elections. Tonga has an all-male Parliament, although women have been elected to Parliament in the past.

The Kingdom of Tonga's 2019 National Voluntary Review reported that, based on the international poverty measure for extreme poverty of US\$1.90 per person per day, about three per cent of the Tongan population was living in extreme poverty. This number had increased from just one per cent in 2016. Tonga has

also developed its own metric for measuring poverty, which captures households that are both materially and socially deprived in financial and non-financial terms. Using this measure, it was estimated that 27 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line.

There are almost as many people of Tongan descent abroad as there are in Tonga. Various programmes enable Tongans to work abroad for fixed terms, generating significant household income through remittances. In 2020, personal remittances received comprised 39 per cent of Tonga's GDP. Tonga's remittances per capita are among the highest for Pacific Island nations, and this dependency on remittances makes the people of Tonga vulnerable to global economic shocks.

Agriculture is the main livelihood activity in the country. In 2016, the Tonga census found that 48 per cent of households were engaged in agriculture while 13 per cent participated in fishing. Tourism is a less significant source of income for Tonga, compared with other Pacific Island nations. Nevertheless, the tourism industry has been significantly affected by the pandemic. One significant asset for the nation, however, is the adult literacy rate, which in 2018 was more than 99 per cent (for both women and men). This is one of the highest literacy rates in the Pacific.

With the decline of traditional food sources and changes to Tonga's way of life, obesity and non-communicable diseases are a significant threat to the health and well-being of the Tongan people. The country has one of the highest rates of non-communicable diseases in the world. Women and girls are also at high risk of experiencing physical and sexual violence. A national study on domestic violence against women in Tonga, conducted in 2013, reported that 79 per cent of women and girls had experienced physical or sexual violence during their lifetime, while 68 per cent of respondents reported that they had been abused by their fathers or their teachers.

The inflation rate for the year to May 2022 was 11.2 per cent – the highest level it has reached since June 2008, amid the global financial crisis. However, it is not unusual for inflation rates to increase in countries which have

experienced disasters, such as volcanos and tsunamis. Moreover, Tonga's rising inflation reflects the impact of rising global fuel prices.

The undersea Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano, located 65km north of the Tongan capital city, Nuku'alofa, began erupting on 20 December 2021. The eruption led to some ashfall, and a tsunami warning was issued on 14 January 2022. However, the magnitude of the eruption witnessed on 15 January 2022 was entirely unexpected. At 17:20 local time, the volcano began to violently erupt, releasing a cloud of billowing ash more than 15km into the air. The eruption lasted approximately eight minutes and was heard and felt 700km away in Fiji. The force of the eruption quickly caused a tsunami across the Pacific Ocean, swamping coastlines and causing casualties and damage in Japan, Chile and North America. In Peru, two deaths were recorded as a result of the tsunami.

Tonga experienced its first outbreak of COVID-19 on 1 February 2022, when two wharf workers tested positive for the Omicron variant. By July 2022, there had been more than 12,539 reported cases and 12 deaths associated with the virus.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tongan Government implemented extensive restrictions. These included lockdowns, school and business closures, restrictions on travel between islands, strict border controls, quarantine requirements and a daily curfew. As a result of these measures, new cases have eased significantly and many restrictions have been relaxed. As of 1 August 2022, it was no longer necessary for international travellers to quarantine upon arrival in Tonga.

One reason for the relatively low death rate related to COVID-19 is Tonga's exceptionally high vaccination rate.

As of 28 July 2022, 98 per cent of people aged 12 and over had received one dose of the vaccine, 91 per cent had received two doses, and 58 per cent had also received a booster shot. However, vaccination rates are lower among children – just 21 per cent of those aged under 12 have received two doses of the vaccine.

Ongoing emergency response

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page [Tonga](#)

- Appeal number: [MDRTO002](#) Tonga Volcano and Tsunami

- Appeal launch and end dates: 21 January 2021 – 21 January 2024
- People affected: 85,000 people
- People to be assisted: 17,000 people

Short description of the emergency

On 20 December 2021, an eruption was observed at Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha'apai, two sister volcanic islands in an uninhabited area approximately 65km north of Nuku'alofa, Tonga's capital. This was followed by further volcanic activity on 14 January.

When the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano erupted on 15 January 2022, it was the largest eruption on record since 1883. It was followed by a tsunami with waves that reached 15m and struck the west coasts of Tongatapu, 'Eua and Ha'apai. The eruption also resulted in an ash cloud reaching heights of 15km, covering an area of 5km².

Damage to international and domestic undersea telecommunications meant that little information was available from Tonga following the eruption. However, New Zealand and Australian Defence Forces conducted surveillance flights on 17 January, which revealed significant damage to houses, roads, water tanks and other infrastructure on the west coast of Tongatapu, the Ha'apai island group and the west coast of 'Eua.

On 18 January, the Prime Minister of Tonga declared a state of emergency. At this point, the Tongan Government and the National Society made a formal request for international assistance. Three direct and one indirect fatality were officially attributed to the volcano and tsunami. Beyond this, the Government estimates that 84,176 people – 84 per cent of the population in Tongatapu, Ha'apai and 'Eua – were affected by the eruption, most by falling ash. About 3,000 people were displaced in the immediate aftermath, including some who were evacuated from seriously affected islands off the coast of Tongatapu and in the Ha'apai island group. Most people subsequently returned to their communities, although some families evacuated from badly affected islands remained in Tongatapu.

The outbreak of COVID-19, which started in February 2022, has had a considerable impact on the response to the volcano and subsequent tsunami. Following the identification of the first cases, the Tongan Government established various COVID-19 prevention measures in Tongatapu, Ha'apai and Vava'u, including a rolling lockdown, a curfew, school and business closures and restrictions on events and gatherings.

Short description of the emergency operational strategy

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) launched an Emergency

Appeal on 21 January 2022 to support the Tonga Red Cross Society's response activities. This Appeal aims to meet the immediate, early and long-term recovery needs of the 17,000 most vulnerable people affected by the disaster (2,833 households). The National Society response, supported by the IFRC, focuses on the following sectors:

- Health and care (including water, sanitation and hygiene), mental health and psychosocial support, and community health care
- Integrated assistance and shelter, livelihoods and multi-purpose cash support
- Protection, gender and inclusion, community engagement and accountability, environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction

After the launch of the Emergency Appeal, various stakeholders, including donors, held discussions about planning. The response operation was identified as an opportunity to further invest in risk management and risk reduction approaches in Tonga. Accordingly, a revised Emergency Appeal was launched on 6 April 2022 with additional resource requirements, which aimed to enable a more holistic disaster risk management approach within the current operation. The revised Appeal also aims to strengthen the National Society's capacity to respond to future disasters and crises in a safe, timely and effective manner. The operation's funding requirement is currently fully covered by hard and soft pledges.

The emergency response phase has now ended and the early recovery phase has begun. As part of this, the National Society has been engaging with government stakeholders and other organizations to coordinate recovery activities across several key sectors, including water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, cash response for vulnerable households and livelihood needs, and National Society development.

The Tonga Red Cross Society has also conducted several capacity building activities to support recovery since April 2022. These include activities related to protection, gender and inclusion, first aid, psychological first aid and psychosocial support, and logistics and data collection. During May 2022, the National Society assessed its stock of supplies to better inform stock replenishment ahead of the 2022–23 cyclone season.

Areas of emergency response by sector

Shelter, housing and settlements

Objective: Communities in disaster- and crisis-affected areas restore and strengthen their safety, well-being and longer-term recovery through shelter and settlement solutions.

Priority actions:

- Distribute emergency shelter assistance and essential household items to meet the immediate needs of targeted populations, including tents, tarpaulins, shelter tool kits, blankets, kitchen sets and solar lanterns
- Support shelter recovery activities for repairs through the provision of shelter assistance and technical support
- Support the National Society and affected communities with shelter software activities to increase awareness on safe shelter, and support community recovery and resilience processes – including Build Back Safer and the Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness ([PASSA](#))
- Coordinate with government agencies and the shelter cluster on the provision of emergency shelter assistance, as well as on mid- to long-term solutions for those in need, with a special focus on people who are displaced and in informal settlements
- Contribute to the building, rebuilding and improvement of community infrastructure as previously agreed, including through an evacuation centre and the provision of safe housing
- Provide shelter training for National Society staff and volunteers

Multi-purpose cash

Objective: Households are provided with unconditional multi-purpose cash grants to address their basic needs and restore and strengthen their livelihoods. Particular emphasis will be placed on providing cash distributions to people living with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

Priority actions:

- Coordinate with government stakeholders and other agencies regarding cash and voucher assistance programming for marginalized groups
- Conduct training, carry out assessments, target segments of the population, and distribute cash grants

Health and care

Objective: The health of individuals and communities among populations affected by the eruption is strengthened through community-level interventions.

Priority actions:

1. Mental health and psychosocial support

- Provide psychological first aid to those affected, as needed
- Provide psychological first aid training to National Society staff and volunteers
- Establish referral pathways for mental health and psychosocial support needs
- Integrate psychosocial activities that target the well-being of staff and volunteers into programming

2. Community health

- Reduce the spread of infectious diseases by providing health messaging around leptospirosis, typhoid, dengue, diarrhoea and COVID-19, while conducting other health promotion activities and providing support for referrals to health facilities
- Provide volunteer training on epidemic control
- Support the clean-up of household properties
- Distribute masks to targeted households to reduce the spread of COVID-19
- Provide health training to National Society staff and volunteers, as needed
- Develop, adapt, print and disseminate health promotion messages

3. First aid

- Provide first aid training and refresher training to National Society staff and volunteers, as needed
- Purchase and replenish National Society first aid materials
- Support the first aid programme

Water, sanitation and hygiene

Objective: Communities have safe drinking water, proper sanitation and adequate hygiene awareness during the relief and recovery phases of the operation.

Priority actions:

- Distribute water in conjunction with the government authorities

- Distribute jerry cans and buckets to transport and store water
- Support safe, sufficient household water, including the distribution of tarpaulins to enable households to cover water tanks; the distribution and installation of water filters in community settings; the provision of information to households regarding safe water; the distribution of water purification tablets; and the restoration or enhancement of community water infrastructure
- Provide portable toilets and latrines for households whose sanitation has been affected by the disaster
- Distribute hygiene kits (including items to address menstrual hygiene needs) and review hygiene kit components prior to procurement
- Promote water, sanitation and hygiene activities, including the provision of information, education and communications materials
- Assess water, sanitation and hygiene needs at the OTA Centre and develop local interventions to assist students as needed
- Support government agencies with water, sanitation and hygiene activities that support people living with disabilities
- Engage with the Ministry of Lands and Water Resources regarding Integrated Water Resource Management Plans and provide support within available resources
- Develop a referral pathway for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence by engaging with relevant organizations and agencies
- Provide training for National Society staff and volunteers on the survivor-centred approach
- Assess and ensure that minimum protection, gender and inclusion standards are mainstreamed throughout technical sectors, and incorporated into assessments
- Provide support for the elderly and people living with disabilities among affected households, including through the provision of mobility aids, diapers, and educational materials for OTA Centre students who are required to remain at home due to the volcanic eruption, tsunami or COVID-19
- Provide support for National Society teachers seeking to upgrade their teaching qualifications
- Review and disseminate the child protection policy with National Society staff and volunteers
- Ensure that any new National Society facilities are accessible to people living with disabilities

Protection and prevention

Objective: Communities and community-based organizations identify the needs of the most at-risk, disadvantaged and marginalized groups (due to inequality, discrimination, and a lack of recognition of human rights) and address their distinct needs.

Priority actions:

- Provide programming to restore family links based on need
- Engage with the protection cluster and organizations supporting people living with disabilities and other marginalized groups
- Support the National Society with organizing and facilitating national and branch-level training for staff and volunteers on protection, gender and inclusion
- Identify gender champions at the branch level

Community engagement and accountability

Objectives: Standardized approaches for community engagement and accountability are developed and deployed to enable meaningful community participation throughout the operation. Community feedback is collected and used to better understand community perspectives and enable the most appropriate programming.

Priority actions:

- Ensure that approaches engage communities in needs assessments, programme planning, implementation and evaluation
- Provide staff and volunteers with training on community engagement and accountability
- Establish a community feedback mechanism
- Share information with affected communities about response progress

Disaster risk reduction

Objective: The response contributes to a decrease in the risk of further impacts of the volcano and tsunami, while strengthening the capacity and capability of the National Society to respond to future disasters and crises, and contributing to a strong foundation for community-based programming.

Priority actions:

National Society disaster management capacity:

- Build National Society capacity in preparedness for effective response
- Develop and approve emergency operations centres and response structures for future emergencies
- Update and disseminate disaster response procedures and standard operating procedures; train personnel on emergency operations centres, the Kobo toolbox, assessments and restoring family links
- Contribute to the rebuilding of the National Society headquarters, and rebuild and repair warehouses and branch emergency operation centres
- Build logistical capacity by strategic pre-positioning, warehousing, and establishing fleet management protocols and procurement processes
- Procure trucks and boats to support future distribution activities
- Review and develop mechanisms to ensure that funds are available in a timely manner following a disaster event

Disaster and crisis response:

- Mobilize staff and volunteers to support disaster, crisis and response activities

- Conduct logistical activities to support the crisis response actions
- Monitor and evaluate programme activities

Community risk reduction and resilience:

- Conduct vulnerability and capacity assessment training for National Society staff and volunteers
- Plan and conduct pilot community-based disaster risk reduction activities in three communities, including community-based recovery, disaster risk response and community-based first aid

Environmental sustainability

Objectives: The recovery phase of the operation is conducted in a manner that does not have long-term adverse environmental impacts. The operation is leveraged to explore sustainability opportunities for the National Society and local communities.

Priority actions:

- Review all recovery interventions to ensure they are conducted in a manner which is consistent with a 'green response'
- Explore opportunities to link up with community-based and private sector sustainability projects in implementing National Society activities

At the end of the operation, any remaining activities that are still required will be incorporated into the IFRC Network's country plan for Tonga for 2024.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Tonga is vulnerable to a range of climate change impacts, including cyclones, flooding, heat waves and droughts. Sea levels are rising at around 6mm per year, which is higher than the global average of about 3mm per year. There are risks of coral bleaching and changing migratory patterns of fish.

Much of the Tonga's seaside capital, Nuku'alofa, is low-lying, and the people who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are those living in coastal areas at low elevations. Another concern is the potential impact on the freshwater lenses in the limestone substrate below Tongatapu. Some islands are dependent on rainwater harvesting and hence are vulnerable to drought.

The Department of Climate Change, within the Tonga Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications, is responsible for developing systems for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Some key policies and programmes include:

- Climate Change Policy (2016)
- Joint National Action Plan 2 on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2018–2028
- Tonga Strategic Development Framework II (2015–2025)

Some of the Ministry of Agriculture's programmes also support the preservation of key natural resources and build the knowledge and skills required for climate-resilient agriculture.

Main actions and areas of support

A climate change adviser will provide technical assistance to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano and tsunami response, ensuring that all Tonga Red Cross Society activities are carried out in a manner which is consistent with a green response. This adviser will also help build capacity for longer-term programming on climate risks and environmental protection.

Disasters and crises

Tonga is currently recovering from the volcano and tsunami which occurred on 15 January 2022. Tectonic boundaries close to Tonga are very active; this can result in large earthquakes affecting the country as well as ongoing smaller quakes and tsunamis. Tonga also experiences an average of two severe storms or cyclones per year, with the highest risk storms occurring between November and April.

Those most vulnerable to disasters and crises in Tonga include people who are reliant on subsistence livelihoods, including fishing, farming and pandanus leaf weaving, particularly in coastal areas. People dependent on rainwater harvesting are also vulnerable to the effects of droughts and cyclones. One factor that contributes to resilient livelihoods in Tonga is the high proportion of households that receive remittances from abroad.

The Tonga Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications has a broad portfolio which includes disaster risk reduction. The country has established early warning systems for high-risk events, including a tsunami warning system, which was activated prior to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano and tsunami. It is likely that it saved many lives.

The National Emergency Management Committee is responsible for the development and revision of the National Emergency Management Plan (Kingdom of Tonga, 2007). Under this plan, the National Emergency Management Office works with Village Emergency Management Committees to develop and revise disaster preparedness plans.

The World Bank's Pacific Resilience Programme has also contributed to disaster preparedness in Tonga through early warning and capacity building activities. Through this programme, the World Bank has also supported the implementation of some preparedness activities.

Many external organizations have also responded to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano and tsunami,

including UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation Tonga Trust, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Working alongside these organizations, the Tonga Red Cross Society distributed water, food and non-food items and provided shelter support and cash grant distributions as part of emergency response operations. In addition, some households received shelter support.

The National Society has actively been building the capacity of its team to respond to disasters and crises in a nuanced fashion since the beginning of the volcano and tsunami response. Recent training activities have included first aid, community engagement and accountability, logistics and procurement, Kobo Toolkit for mobile data collection, post-distribution monitoring and Microsoft Office.

Main actions and areas of support

The IFRC is supporting the Tonga Red Cross Society by providing training and capacity building activities for staff and volunteers engaged in the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano and tsunami response. It is also engaged in procurement processes, the rebuilding of the National Society's headquarters and the development of National Society emergency operations centres. These actions will contribute to the National Society's overall preparedness and response capacity for future disasters and crises in the archipelago.

Health and wellbeing

The World Bank's 2020 report on non-communicable diseases found that 83 per cent of deaths in Tonga are from non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. Diabetes, in particular, affects a third of women and a third of men in Tonga. The country has experienced a significant increase in obesity rates in recent years, among both adults and children. Moreover, the 2021 Global Nutrition Report estimated that, in 2020, about 95 per cent of the population was overweight or obese.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 Omicron variant on 1 February 2022 had a significant impact on health and well-being in Tonga, but this has since eased significantly, largely due to the country's strong vaccination programme.

In 2017, there were only four hospitals, 14 health centres and 34 maternal and child health clinics across

all of Tonga. In addition to an infrastructure shortage, Tonga is also experiencing a shortage of skilled health professionals, including specialists required to provide non-communicable disease care. Similarly, there is a shortage of female health care providers, which makes it increasingly difficult for women to access key services, in a country where they already need to travel long distances and pay high health care fees.

The Tonga Ministry of Health has developed various policies and strategies to reduce the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Similarly, the Tonga Health Promotion Foundation aims to promote physical activity and improved diets through the provision of education about alcohol, smoking and healthy lifestyles. It also provides grants for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

UNICEF has been a staunch supporter of the Tonga Ministry of Health since the volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami, particularly in its response to the country's COVID-19 outbreak.

The Tonga Red Cross Society runs both commercial and community-based first aid programmes. It also supports the Ministry of Health's blood donation programme. In terms of mental health and psychosocial support, the National Society is currently running a series of community events which provide an opportunity to engage with those in need of psychosocial support.

Main actions and areas of support

During 2023, the Tonga Red Cross Society will continue to provide health messaging, including health promotion activities around COVID-19. In 2022, the Tonga Red Cross team received training in psychological first aid and psychosocial support. In 2023, the IFRC will support the National Society with receiving refresher training in psychological first aid to enable the team to continue to provide support to communities. In addition, the IFRC will provide further support for the National Society's first aid programme in 2023.

Migration and displacement

Since the 1960s, Tonga has experienced high levels of outward migration, primarily for the purpose of employment. While these moves are often permanent, in some cases they are temporary. These instances include studying abroad and temporary migration for seasonal work programmes.

In addition to international migration, there is also a trend of migration from the outer islands to Tongatapu. Some communities have also been migrating to other

locations within the country in the wake of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano and tsunami. Furthermore, climate change related migration is expected to increase in the coming years.

External migration has provided economic benefits to migrants, their families and the Tongan economy. However, it can contribute to tensions within families and shortages of labour within the country. There are also risks that remittances do not arrive on time to pay local bills – heightened when a family's primary provider has migrated abroad. Moreover, the significant number of emigrants often means there are insufficient family members remaining to care for the young and elderly.

IOM is an active player in migration in Tonga and provides ongoing policy support to the Tongan Government around migration-related issues.

To support the Government's migration work, the Tonga Red Cross Society has been contracted to provide commercial first aid training to some seasonal workers who migrate abroad.

Government and humanitarian actors have been assisting around 100 families who were living in informal settlements close to the coast and were affected by the volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami in January 2022. Those who have been displaced from their homes and islands have been supported through coordinated programming.

Main actions and areas of support

The Tonga Red Cross Society's focus under this priority area is disaster-related displacement. This consists of providing support for basic needs, livelihoods, shelter and housing needs. The National Society also provides restoring family links programming to reunite families that have been separated due to migration. Moreover, the activities carried out during the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano emergency operation have strengthened the National Society's capacity to respond to future shocks, including in terms of migration programming.

Values, power and inclusion

There are multiple issues relating to values, power and inclusion in Tonga. These include high rates of physical and sexual violence against women and children, the limited services available to people living with disabilities, and violence and laws that negatively affect gender-diverse populations. The response to the volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami in January 2022 has demonstrated that those most vulnerable in crises include people living with disabilities, the elderly,

single-parent households, pregnant women, young mothers, young children, and people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Prevailing social norms within Tonga also mean that disasters often increase the likelihood of gender-based violence.

A 2009 national study on violence against women found that 77 per cent of women reported experiencing physical or sexual violence during their lifetimes. It also found that 68 per cent reported physical violence by someone other than a partner, occurring after the time they were 15 years old. Every year, an estimated five to ten thousand women experience intimate partner violence in Tonga. Women are not legally permitted to own land, and this can make it difficult to remove a violent partner from a family home.

The 2019 Tonga Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey identified that 79 per cent of children aged between one and 14 years of age reported being physically punished in the previous month, while 23 per cent reported being severely physically punished.

Efforts are being made to address family violence. In 2013, the Tonga Family Protection Act was passed, and more recently, the Tonga Family Protection Legal Aid Centre was established, which is run by the Ministry of Justice. The Tonga Women and Children Crisis Centre and the Tonga National Centre for Women and Children also provide support to women and children affected by domestic violence.

Tonga's 2018 National Disability Survey suggests that there are approximately 4,000 people living with disabilities in the country. Specialized programmes for people living with disabilities, including special education programmes, are only available in certain communities. Even where such programming exists, it often remains underfunded, and families struggle to pay user fees and associated costs. In May 2022, the Tonga Red Cross Society team conducted a survey of households with a person living with a disability, to identify needs and to prepare for a cash distribution programme to support these households. The National Society also runs a school for children living with disabilities, the OTA Centre, which was temporarily closed following the outbreak of COVID-19 in February 2022. Through this school, the National Society has also provided support to the families of children living with disabilities through the provision of water, food, family kits and school supplies.

In Tonga, fakaleiti (known as leitis) are people born as males who take up roles generally reserved for women. While this is a longstanding Polynesian tradition, leitis and Tongans that identify as LGBTQI+ are vulnerable to prejudice, discrimination and sometimes violence. In Tonga, it is an offence for adult males to be in same-sex relationships, punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment. The Tonga Leitis Association is the only civil society organization in Tonga that provides dedicated support for leitis and LGBTQI+ people. It runs a community centre and safe house, and acts as an advocate on behalf of leitis and people from the LGBTQI+ community. The National Society is acutely aware of the dangers present in the community for those with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics; in 2021, its long-time staff member and Chair of the Pacific Red Cross Protection, Gender and Inclusion Network was murdered, in what has been identified as a hate crime.

During 2022, the Tonga Red Cross has been developing its protection, gender and inclusion programme. This has included the development of a referral pathway to enhance support for those facing challenges in this area. The National Society uses gender-sensitive approaches across its emergency response operations, particularly when conducting community assessments and distributing cash and other relief items.

Main actions and areas of support

During 2023, the National Society will enhance the teaching qualifications of the teachers working in the Tonga Red Cross OTA Centre, which provides support for children living with disabilities. The Tonga Red Cross Society will also aim to support elderly people living with disabilities in 2023, through the provision of mobility aids, including walking frames and wheelchairs.

During the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano and tsunami response operation, protection, gender and inclusion, and community engagement and accountability, were mainstreamed across response activities. This enabled the National Society to reach more people in need of assistance, while strengthening its capacity to address future challenges around power, values and inclusion across the archipelago. The National Society intends to build on this work to provide more people-centred approaches in the future, during both emergency response operations and longer-term community-based work. It also demonstrates the National Society's values to the communities in which they work, fostering a greater environment of trust.

Enabling local actors

The Tonga Red Cross Society is committed to pursuing institutional strengthening. It has focused on preparedness activities, which enabled it to immediately engage in an effective, locally led response following the volcanic eruption and tsunami in January 2022. The National Society undertook a Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) simulation in 2021. This resulted in the strengthening of National Society emergency actions, the provision of refresher training for emergency response and enhanced contingency planning. The IFRC's PER approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps within their preparedness and response mechanisms; ultimately, this enables National Societies to take the necessary steps to improve these mechanisms.

Main actions and areas of support

- Digitally transform the National Society by building upon technology procurement associated with the 2022 Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai response
- Continue strengthening systems and processes around planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, information management and finance; conduct mid-term reviews and final evaluations; develop lessons learned from the volcano and tsunami response operation
- Enhance the capacity of the National Society to respond to future disaster events by enhancing its transportation capacity, increasing its capacity in cash and voucher assistance programming, ensuring prepositioned stocks are replenished and enabling a workplace to function as an emergency operation centre
- Review and disseminate internal policies, including the National Society's child protection policy
- Ensure a stronger, more financially sustainable National Society that can respond to emergencies at scale across the archipelago, by providing expert support in National Society development

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC Pacific country cluster delegation, based in Suva, Fiji, provides support to 11 Pacific Island National Societies, including the Tonga Red Cross Society. The IFRC provides support in disaster risk management, resilience, disaster response law, community-based climate risk reduction, shelter, health, and protection, gender and inclusion. It also provides support services in National Society development, planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, finance and logistics. The IFRC Pacific country cluster delegation facilitates networking among the Pacific National Societies and supports capacity building initiatives, including the Pacific Emergency Responder Capacity Initiative and the PER initiative, to improve National Societies' readiness to respond.

For the volcano and tsunami response, the IFRC has supported the Tonga Red Cross Society in response planning and reporting, communications, coordination with partners, water, sanitation and hygiene, logistics, media coverage and communications with the public. Since the eruption, the IFRC has also met with partners

to coordinate interest in the provision of funding, relief items and surge assistance. This support enables the National Society to implement relief activities, initiate early and long-term recovery and ensure that it is prepared to respond quickly and effectively to any future crises.

To date, three IFRC staff have supported the response on the ground in Tonga: a rapid response water, sanitation and hygiene coordinator; the country cluster delegation preparedness and response manager; and the senior finance officer. Moreover, IFRC staff have provided capacity support and guidance to senior leaders of the Tonga Red Cross Society in their response.

IFRC membership coordination

IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context and associated needs. It also works with National Societies to agree upon common priorities and co-develop common strategies to address issues

Participating National Society Support - Bilateral

Name of Partner NS	Funding Requirements	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Engaged	Accountable	Trusted
Australian Red Cross			●			●		●	
New Zealand Red Cross		●	●	●			●	●	

around humanitarian access, acceptance of the IFRC and National Societies, and the accessibility of humanitarian space. Moreover, IFRC coordination involves the mobilization of funding and other resources, consistent public messaging, and progress monitoring. The IFRC also ensures that strategies and programmes clearly incorporate humanitarian action, development assistance, and efforts to reinforce National Societies in their respective countries, including through their auxiliary role.

IFRC members that have supported the volcano and tsunami Emergency Appeal with cash pledges include the

American Red Cross, Australian Red Cross, British Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Hong Kong branch of the Red Cross Society of China, Japanese Red Cross Society, the Republic of Korea National Red Cross, Latvian Red Cross, Red Cross of Monaco, New Zealand

Red Cross, Singapore Red Cross Society, Taiwan Red Cross Organization, and Tuvalu Red Cross Society.

In addition, the Australian Red Cross, Red Cross Society of China, Danish Red Cross, French Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross have provided gifts in kind. Immediately after the eruption, the Australian Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross (with transportation support from the Australia and New Zealand Defence Forces) sent emergency relief supplies to the Tonga Red Cross Society. The Red Cross Society of China has also bilaterally pledged support funds. There are no IFRC members with an ongoing in-country presence in Tonga. However, in-country and remote support is provided on a needs basis by the Australian Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross. The Australian Red Cross supports the Tonga Red Cross Society in resource mobilization activities, while the New Zealand Red Cross provides support for information and communications technology and first aid activities.

Movement coordination

The Tonga Red Cross Society and the IFRC collaborate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for both longer-term support and emergency response. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC maintains a delegation in Suva and supports National Societies in the Pacific. This includes

providing support to the Tonga Red Cross Society in its public communications work, the implementation of its Restoring Family Links programme, ensuring safer access, promoting international humanitarian law and raising humanitarian issues with governments, security forces, academic circles, the media and civil society. In Tonga, the ICRC also provides funding for the National Society's communication and dissemination officer role.

Coordination with other actors

The Tonga Red Cross Society engages with multiple government departments, particularly the National Emergency Management Office, the Ministry of Health and the Tonga Meteorological Service, under the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC). The Government's

National Disaster Plan recognizes the National Society as a provider of relief and assistance in emergency and recovery situations. Moreover, the National Society is represented on the National Emergency Management Committee, the leading coordinating body for disasters in Tonga.

The Tonga Red Cross also provides support to the Ministry of Health, specifically around its blood transfusion and immunohaematology service, which collects blood from low-risk donors.

In addition, the National Society engages and coordinates with local civil society organizations on a needs basis. The President of the National Society is also the Chair of the local Civil Society Forum of Tonga, which has facilitated engagement with civil society organizations

The Tongan Government has been leading the emergency response for the volcano and tsunami. The National Emergency Management Office has coordinated efforts and activated national and district emergency operations centres. The Tonga Red Cross Society has coordinated closely with the National Emergency Management Office and participates in the National Emergency Management Committee, chaired by the Tongan Prime Minister. National Society volunteers have mobilized, at the National Emergency Management Office's request, and have supported joint damage assessments. The National Emergency Management Office has also made radio announcements encouraging communities at risk to cooperate with National Society volunteers. All coordination activities are co-led by a government ministry and a humanitarian agency. The National Society in Tonga attended all national inter-cluster meetings,

chaired by the National Emergency Management Office. It also participated in the national-level emergency shelter and non-food items cluster, the water, sanitation and hygiene cluster and the safety and protection cluster. Bilateral engagement with other actors has also been valuable in reducing the risk of duplication of efforts and aligning the National Society's response, particularly among water, sanitation and hygiene and cash-based interventions, with like-minded organizations.

The IFRC is recognized as the co-lead of the emergency shelter and non-food item cluster with the National Emergency Management Office. The global shelter cluster is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee coordination mechanism that the IFRC has led in disaster contexts since the establishment of the cluster approach in 2005. This critical mandate situates the IFRC as one of the leading agencies in the international humanitarian coordination system. The IFRC leverages its leadership position in the global shelter cluster to enable improved coordination, stronger policies and standards across the sector and better support for affected people in their recovery.

The IFRC also participates in coordination at the regional level, including through the Pacific humanitarian team, the Pacific regional cash working group, and the regional protection cluster.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\) data](#)
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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