



Samoa Red Cross Society

Summary Report

Learning Workshop

Samoa Earthquake and Tsunami Response

January 12 – 14th, 2010

Insel Fehmarn Hotel, Apia, Samoa

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1. Executive Summary

In committing support to the tsunami recovery operation in Samoa, Red Cross Movement partners and IFRC have also committed to the capacity building of the Samoa Red Cross and to coordinate to ensure a consistent approach to the support given to SRC. The capacity-building and learning components of the Samoa Tsunami Response are to be implemented in several ways – the provision of technical expertise; peer-to-peer learning opportunities; satisfaction surveys – and a series of “learning” events. With the shift from Relief to Recovery came an opportunity to review the Relief phase of the tsunami response.

The purpose of the Learning Workshop was to review the first 8 weeks of the Samoa tsunami relief operation with the goal of incorporating the recommendation from the lessons learned into the ongoing operation in Samoa as well as improving future disaster responses in the Pacific region.

1.1.Key Findings included:

Although the Samoa Red Cross was thrust into a disaster response far beyond their previous experience, the Society was able to overcome the challenges and provide critical relief support to the affected communities.

All of the Pacific Region movement partners have expressed an interest in supporting initiatives which will further develop a Regionally-based disaster response approach through capacity-building and coordination.

1.2.Key Recommendations

- Samoa Red Cross develops tools and expertise in needs assessments, based on standards of the Federation and adapted to the local context.
- Red Cross Movement partners in the Pacific region analyze the potential for and support needed for development of an RDRT in the Pacific.
- All Red Cross Movement partners work together to develop guidelines and procedures on the roles and relationships of different actors during disasters in the Pacific, including when the scale may require a local, regional or international response.
- The Samoa Red Cross, Federation, and Pacific National Societies identify culturally appropriate methods and entry points to incorporate active beneficiary participation in their disaster-preparedness systems.
- The Federation, PNS and Pacific National Society partners review the disaster preparedness training being taught in the region to ensure that they are up-to-date and appropriate for the Pacific.

2. Background

Following an 8.3 magnitude earthquake, a tsunami with waves up to 11 metres struck south Upolu Island in Samoa on 29 September 2009. Over 140 people lost their lives and approximately 5,000 people were affected. The Samoa Red Cross instantly sprung into action – conducting needs assessment of the affected population; distributing relief items; providing emergency water and sanitation support; and managing a pool of local and international volunteers which reached over 500 in number.

Soon after the tsunami, the Samoa Red Cross requested support from other movement partners, including the International Federation of the Red Cross. A Federation-supported FACT team arrived within hours after the tsunami to provide technical support and an assessment of the scale and scope of the disaster. At the same time, an outpouring of support reached other National societies, including the New Zealand Red Cross and the Australian Red Cross. Samoa Red Cross has received support through a Federation Emergency Response Appeal; as well as through bilateral National Society Partners -New Zealand Red Cross; Australia Red Cross; French Red Cross; and the support of other Pacific National Societies.

In order for all of the Red Cross Movement to maximize the learning opportunity and benefit from the response to the Samoa tsunami, a Learning Workshop was held to reflect on the experiences of the first 8 weeks following the disaster.

3. Purpose and Objectives of the Samoa Tsunami Response Learning Workshop

The purpose of the Learning workshop was to improve disaster response in Samoa and the Pacific Region. Over 30 representatives from 8 National Societies and the International Federation, who were involved in the response to the September 2009 Samoa Earthquake & Tsunami participated in the event. (See Annex 1 – participants list).

The Samoa Tsunami Response Learning Workshop had four objectives:

1. To identify the key learnings in order to improve future responses in Samoa and in the Pacific region.
2. To understand the relationship between Samoa Red Cross, the International Federation and other regional partners in responding to such disasters
3. To identify ways to improve ongoing operations in Samoa
4. To determine a common learning framework.

4. Methodology and Learning Outcomes

The Learning Workshop incorporated both pre-learning and day-of activities. Pre-learning activities were provided by a learning consultant who was commissioned to 1) provide a lessons learned report and analysis based on key informant interviews and an online staff and volunteer survey; and 2) provide support in developing a Movement learning framework to help advance learning for the Samoa Red Cross and partners. The analysis and summary of these activities were incorporated into the workshop itself and served as points for discussion.

The 3-day workshop was held in Samoa from 12th-14th January. The workshop was facilitated by an external consultant, with 5 Samoa Red Cross volunteers serving as assistant facilitators. Methodologies used included the “learning café” and small and large group discussions. Group work was structured in a variety of ways in so that participants had the opportunity to hear from across the spectrum of participant backgrounds and roles. While each session had a specific focus, there were several key themes which emerged.

4.1.Key Emerging Themes

The first three sessions of the workshop (World Café; Discussion and Response to Lessons Learned Report; Group work on identifying key learnings) focused on drawing out and analyzing the experiences during the tsunami response. The key themes that emerged during these sessions included:

- 1) Appreciation for the accomplishments of the Samoa Red Cross during the relief operation.
 - Given the resources and overwhelming damage of the tsunami, Samoa Red Cross did a great job.
 - Samoa Red Cross has a committed pool of staff and volunteers
 - The image and recognition of the Samoa Red Cross has improved as a result of the tsunami operation

- 2) The importance of building and supporting regionally-based disaster response capacity.
 - There are local knowledgeable staff that have years of experience and knowledge of the potential disasters in region which can be utilized.
 - Regional knowledge, tools, funds, and resources should be considered and maximized before going outside the region for assistance.
 - The role and readiness of RDRT in the region needs analysis and development support.

- 3) Good communication is essential on all levels.
 - Improved communication between SRC staff, board, volunteers and donors would lead to better efficiency.
 - Information from the field to SRC office about the needs of beneficiaries needs to be improved so that vulnerable people do not “fall through the cracks”

- Clear communication needed to by all partners to clarify roles of IFRC and bilateral partners and when/why each partner is called to respond to an emergency.
- 4) Learning from the tsunami operation is not limited to the SRC, but for all of the Red Cross Movement in the Pacific region.
- Way forward should not focus on just one national society but engage the tools available to us for broader use and thus improve all national societies in Pacific and beyond.
- 5) Community resilience is dependent on community-based disaster preparedness programming
- Not just asking questions but also has people in communities be consulted and also inform staff/volunteers. Specifically, need a trained person in each village who can act as branch of Red Cross thus better informed and faster responses?
 - SRCS should develop ways in which to understand and identify the most “vulnerable.” Training and support should be given in the future to village Mayors/Matai’s, as they were not sure of what SRCS’s definition of most vulnerable was.
 - Need to develop new techniques on how to raise community interest in tsunami evacuation drills
 - Establish a local first aid trained representative in each village.
- 6) Assessment tools and skills are critical in disaster response operations.
- There should be a clearer methodology and training for volunteers in order to choose more appropriate beneficiaries.
 - There is a strong need to improve assessments, gender sensitivity, preparation, and logistics.
 - There needs to be assessment trainings at all levels. Several different methods were used and should be improved and unified for future operations.
- 7) The readiness of volunteers is the basis for the overall readiness of the society to respond to disasters.
- “Spontaneous” volunteers often appear in emergencies and the Society needs to have systems in place for how to best utilize them.
 - Attention should be paid to the security, safety, and psychological needs of volunteers and staff.
- 8) Disaster Preparedness systems and procedures should be updated regularly.
- There was insufficient stock of relief supplies. Well-stocked containers and depots are essential for future operations.

- Gender specific needs should be addressed and included in the Disaster Response plan. Suggested to utilize tools and resources already developed on this issue.
- 9) There needs to be good coordination between all components of the Red Cross Movement.
- It would be beneficial to have regional meetings and trainings on a regular basis with regional National Societies staff and volunteer, not just the Secretary Generals.
 - Ideally with disaster response there should be a quicker response period for Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).
 - There is a firm commitment from IFRC to learn from SRCS experiences. There seems to be ongoing confusion about the role of IFRC and it's guidelines for responsibilities when implementing disaster relief and staff. We should try to create a guideline/policy where IFRC outside staff are sensitive and responsive to entering a National Societies and working with them, by same token National Societies should improve ability to include IFRC staff members and contribution.
- 10) It is important that the roles of Government and Red Cross in a disaster are clear.
- 11) There is a need for further capacity-building for Samoa Red Cross and other Pacific National Societies.
- In addition to technical skills, such as assessments and VCA, support is needed in the areas of financial management; decision-making; and working with international partners
 - Staff and volunteers were not prepared to safely handle dead bodies

4.2.A Learning Framework

Participants worked in groups of 3 to explore the meaning of "learning". Results were consolidated when each group reported back to the larger group. The common issues which arose in the groups included:

- A fun, personal, learner-driven attitude toward learning is important.
- Learning is best accomplished when it culturally appropriate and personally relevant (use of local language; images and examples used are relevant to the learner)
- Learning together as an organization or team depends on holding a shared vision.
- Effective learning takes good planning – who, what, when, how, why
- Supportive management and a supportive environment help create successful learning.
- Learning is ongoing, dynamic and continuous.

4.3.Recommendations

Workshop participants worked in groups to develop recommendations. The groups were: Samoa Red Cross Staff; Samoa Red Cross Volunteers; Pacific National Societies; and IFRC & PNS (ARC, NZRC, and FRC). Each group looked activities they wanted to keep doing, activities to start or change, and activities that they should consider stopping.

Samoa Red Cross Staff Recommendations

Continue or Start:

- Supporting volunteer skills and involvement with communities
- WatSan Education
- Logistics Training
- Localizing Federation Standard Operating Procedures
- Social Mapping and other community-based tools
- Strengthening emergency response
- Improving Communication – consider VHF Radios
- Filling the Gaps of what government and other organizations don't do
- Health promotion
- Complementing the efforts of other partners
- Coordinating and not duplicating other's efforts
- Formalize the RDRT
- Improve personal attitudes
- Introduce Federation financial system and procedures to Samoa Red Cross
- Create a psychosocial program
- Reviewing needs and responding to changes in situation

Stop:

- Taking security risks in the field

Samoa Red Cross Volunteers Recommendations

Continue or Start:

- Recruiting more volunteers in the community
- Encouraging peer education
- Building the capacity of volunteers and recognizing their work
- Treating all volunteers equally
- Encouraging volunteer exposure to trainings and workshops
- Promoting Volunteerism and recognition for volunteers
- Provide training center for volunteers at headquarters
- Provide psycho-social support for volunteers
- Establish a committee to be in charge of volunteer activities
- Provide insurance in the case of accident or injury
- Initiate workshops regionally and locally
- Enforce a Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Encourage clear lines of authority and communication

Stop:

- Exploitation of Volunteers
- Poor Communication
- (Stop) Allowing personal difference to affect work
- (Stop) allocation of volunteers according to personal preferences rather than according to skills

Pacific National Societies Recommendations

Continue or Start:

- R** Supporting Disaster Preparedness Program including health and climate change
- R** Acknowledging the work of volunteers
- R** Stressing the importance of a Regional Emergency Response Team
- R** Focusing on bilateral partnerships
- R** Acknowledging the need for psychosocial support
- R** Promoting disaster awareness and education
- R** Improving communication tools and training through headquarters, National Society, communities and beneficiaries.
- R** Health and Disaster training in the region; create better dissemination techniques to the grass roots level
- R** Establish roles and responsibilities between different organizations, National Societies and the local government.
- R** Clarify disaster preparedness terminology to create common understanding
- R** Begin contingency planning to identify how Red Cross partners and National Societies should communicate when dealing with disaster
- R** Create a hotline for RFL within 24 hours of a disaster when communication is the most necessary
- R** Strengthen the RDRT system and provide training for RDRT in the Pacific Region
- R** Establish ways to improve beneficiary participation
- R** Recognize the need to discuss appeals with PNS before IFRC decides to launch an appeal
- R** Strengthen assessment skills and revise the assessment template so it is simpler and more relevant to each nation. Use the next Disaster Management Forum to revise the assessment template.

Stop:

- X** Stop taking goods in kind
- X** Stop beating ourselves up as the response was quite good

IFRC and Partner National Societies Recommendations

Continue or Start:

- R** Facilitating the Support requested from IFRC
- R** Peer-to-Peer exchanges and inter-regional training
- R** Raising Awareness of RC/RC global commitments
- R** In times of peace, continue ongoing cooperation and harmonization
- R** Continue the commitment of IFRC at the Disaster Management Forum
- R** To acknowledge the challenges of disseminating global policies to National Societies
- R** Promote regional issues on behalf of National Societies
- R** Ensure that IFRC office incorporates the lessons learnt from this workshop
- R** Establish RDRT and make the team sustainable in each National Society
- R** Review and revisit Disaster Management Team training for National Societies
- R** Establish roles and responsibilities between PNS/IFRC, and KL/Suva, and affected National Societies in the Disaster Management Framework
- R** Provide more technical support
- R** Clarify emergency logistics between UN, PNS, and IFRC
- R** Provide training to conduct needs analysis for IFRC staff as well as NS Staff (i.e. operations management and implementation)

- R** Keep country-centered focus (IFRC Suva Office) and support initiatives to improve National Societies Disaster Management information
- R** Incorporate the common learning framework in everyday activities.
- R** Increase the focus on country contingency integration
- R** Prioritize consultations, simulation and exercises for IFRC and National Societies
- R** Promote standardization and accreditation for trainings.
- R** Work towards a common M&E and reporting framework that is agreed upon by all partners
- R** Support SRC to conduct a baseline beneficiary satisfaction survey and revisit this survey over time
- R** Prepare a management response to the issues raised in this workshop

Stop:

- X** Do not stop anything

5. Annexes

A. List of Participants

B. Lessons Learned Report (Analysis of Online Staff & Volunteer Survey; Key Informants Interviews)

C. Developing a Common Organizational Learning Framework Discussion Paper