

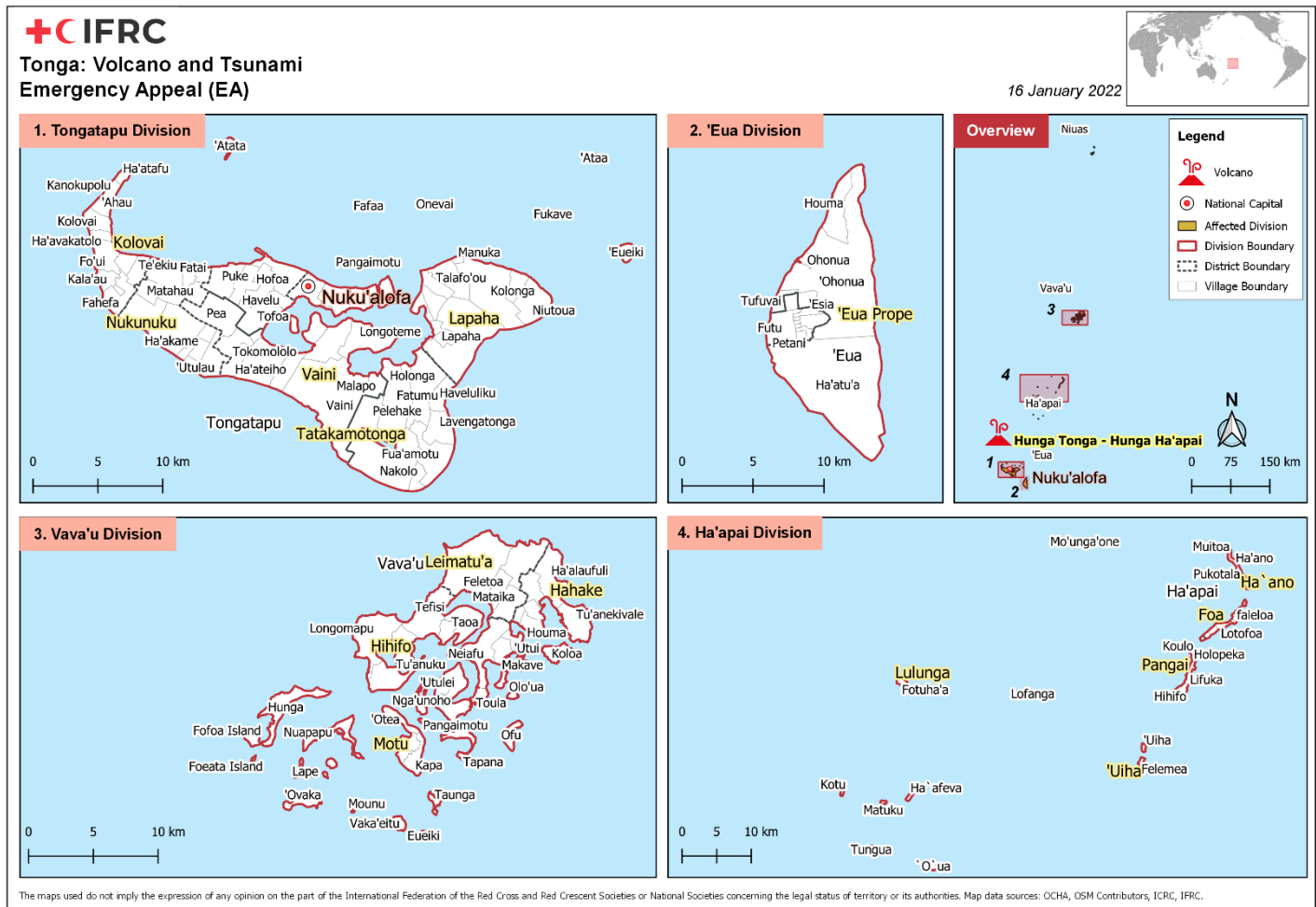
Emergency appeal №: MDRT0002 First launched on: 21/01/2022	Glide №: VO-2022-000005-TON
Final report issued on: 01/06/2024	Timeframe covered by final report: From 21/01/2022 to 21/01/2024
Number of people targeted: 17,000	Number of people assisted: 15,507
Funding coverage (CHF): CHF 4.0 million through the IFRC Emergency Appeal CHF 4.9 million Federation-wide	DREF amount initially allocated: CHF 430,666



Tonga Red Cross Volunteers reaching the Nomuka Island to provide much needed relief on the 22 January 2022. (Picture © TRCS)

A. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Description of the crisis



The Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai (HTHH) volcanic eruption on 15 January 2022, marked a significant natural disaster, being the largest eruption since Krakatoa in 1883. This catastrophic event triggered massive tsunami waves, reaching up to 15 meters, impacting the west coasts of Tongatapu, 'Eua, and Ha'apai. The eruption resulted in thick ash clouds that shrouded these areas in darkness and covered the land with a heavy layer of ash.¹ The eruption severely damaged both international and domestic undersea telecommunications, severely limiting information flow from Tonga in the immediate aftermath. Surveillance flights by the New Zealand Defence Force and Australian Defence Forces on 17 January 2022, revealed extensive damage to houses, roads, water tanks, and other infrastructure in the affected areas. In response to the widespread devastation, the Prime Minister of Tonga declared a state of emergency on 18 January 2022, effective from the day after the eruption. This declaration led to the Tongan government and the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) seeking international assistance for disaster response.²

The limited availability of resources and relief supplies in Tonga at the outset of the disaster compounded the difficulties. With the need for immediate aid, the TRCS and its partners had to mobilize quickly to ensure that essential relief items, including shelter materials, food, water, and medical supplies, could reach those in need. However, the disrupted transportation networks, damaged infrastructure, and logistical constraints made the distribution of aid a complex and demanding task.

¹ [Tonga Volcanic Eruption & Tsunami 2022 | NASA Applied Sciences](#)

² [Tonga: Volcanic eruption and tsunami cuts off country from the world - Tonga | ReliefWeb](#)

Despite these formidable challenges, the TRCS, along with its Red Cross Red Crescent partners and other actors, mobilized a significant number of volunteers and resources to respond swiftly to the disaster. Their dedication and tireless efforts were instrumental in addressing the pressing needs of the affected communities and laying the foundation for a comprehensive and sustained recovery process.

Tragically, the disaster directly resulted in three confirmed fatalities, with one additional indirect death. The eruption's occurrence during daylight hours, accompanied by loud sonic booms, played a crucial role in minimizing fatalities and injuries, as people quickly moved away from the coastlines. Early government estimates indicated that about 84 per cent of the population, or 84,176 people across Tongatapu, Ha'apai, and 'Eua, were affected, mainly by the ashfall. Initially, around 3,000 individuals were displaced, including evacuees from islands severely impacted by the event. While most have since returned to their communities, some families from the most severely affected islands remain displaced in Tongatapu.

Two years have passed since the volcanic eruption in Tonga, and while the nation has made strides towards recovery, particularly in the resumption of tourism activities, there are lingering challenges that persist, especially in the main and outer islands. Many communities continue to patiently await the fulfilment of the government-led tsunami home recovery efforts, highlighting the enduring impact of the eruption on the affected populations and the ongoing necessity for comprehensive recovery strategies.

One significant hurdle in the recovery process has been the government's decision-making approach regarding the strategy for complete rehabilitation of those affected. While the household program remains in progress, there are still homes left unfinished, causing understandable frustration among the affected residents. The Tongan government has pledged to complete these homes by June 2023, with pressure coming from various quarters, including other government agencies, TRCS, UN agencies, and even the Royal family. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that a more substantial legislative framework within the Tongan Parliament may be necessary to expedite and ensure the successful completion of the recovery process.

Impact of the Tsunami on the Islands

The catastrophic³ volcanic eruption and ensuing tsunami that struck Tonga on 15 January 2022 had profound and far-reaching consequences for this island nation, affecting approximately 85,000 people, equivalent to roughly 85 per cent of its population. The impact of this natural disaster was staggering, resulting in an estimated \$90 million in economic losses, according to the initial impact⁴ report conducted in the wake of the catastrophe. The eruption, emanating from the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai underwater volcano, unleashed waves of varying heights, some reaching as high as 15 meters, which inundated the coastal areas of the country. This destructive force claimed the lives of three individuals and severed Tonga's communication links with the outside world, leaving the nation isolated for weeks. As communication lines were gradually restored, and aid agencies gained access to affected areas, a clearer picture of the extensive devastation emerged. The World Bank's impact report revealed the staggering \$90.4 million in economic damages incurred by the disaster. Importantly, these figures only represent the direct costs and immediate losses. When considering follow-on losses resulting from the disruption to vital sectors such as tourism, commerce, agriculture, and infrastructure, the overall economic toll is expected to be significantly higher. Tonga's economy, already grappling with the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, had pinned hopes on a tourism recovery once international borders reopened. However, the volcanic eruption wrought havoc on the country's tourism infrastructure. This damage extended beyond privately owned resorts to include critical public spaces, walkways, moorings, and associated infrastructure in key tourist areas like Nuku'alofa, the capital.

³ [Assessing the Aftermath of Tonga's Volcanic Eruption and Tsunami – The Diplomat](#)

⁴ [World Bank Initial Report](#)

Agriculture, a crucial component of Tonga's economy, also bore the brunt of the disaster. While the impact of ashfall on root crops was lower than anticipated, certain fruits and vegetables, including bananas, pineapples, tomatoes, and watermelons, suffered substantial damage. Ongoing monitoring is deemed necessary to ensure that subsistence farmers and households have an adequate supply of produce in the coming months. To compound the challenges, Tonga, like the rest of the world, faced the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite efforts to provide contactless aid, the first reported cases of COVID-19 in Tonga were confirmed shortly after aid began arriving. In response to the crisis, several countries and organizations extended critical assistance. Australia⁵ provided AUD\$3 million in humanitarian funding and delivered over 220 tons of emergency medical relief supplies, including shelter materials and water and sanitation provisions. The New Zealand government contributed NZD\$3 million in humanitarian funding, dispatched crews to aid in the cleanup, and initiated a successful donation appeal that raised more than \$560,000. Additionally, New Zealand's philanthropist Graeme Hart⁶ donated 30 fishing boats, eight tractors, and multiple containers of food. China, France, Japan, the World Bank, and numerous NGOs also lent their support to Tonga in this time of need. Given Tonga's heavy reliance on remittance inflows, equivalent to 37.7 per cent of its GDP in 2020, the country will heavily depend on Tongans living abroad to send money home to support the nation's recovery efforts. This underscores the critical role of the global Tongan diaspora in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of their homeland.



Red Cross teams in Tonga setting up a temporary shelter in the village of Kanokupolu, western Tongatapu on Friday. (Photo: TRCS)

The government also released the names of the two Tongan nationals who died in the tsunami: Lataimaumi Lauaki, a 49-year-old woman from Nomuka; and Telai Tutu'ila, a 65-year-old man from Mango Island. They were buried in the days after the disaster.

As confirmed by the Government of Tonga, extensive damage was reported across the western side of the Tongatapu Islands, 'Eua and Ha'apai Islands with most displaced families staying with relatives. The Tonga government confirmed that people from Mongao, Atata and Fonoifua islands were evacuated. The devastating impact of the volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami in Tonga has left a trail of destruction, with approximately 600 structures severely

⁵ [Further humanitarian support for Tonga | Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs \(foreignminister.gov.au\)](https://foreignminister.gov.au)

⁶ [New Zealand's richest person donates fishing boats, tractors and food to Tonga | PINA](https://pina.org.nz)

⁷ [Tonga Volcanic Eruption and Tsunami: World Bank Disaster Assessment Report Estimates Damages at US\\$90M](https://www.worldbank.org)



New Zealand Chinook supporting the humanitarian efforts. (Photo Credit ©2022 TRCS)

affected, including a staggering 300 residential buildings. The estimated cost of the damage stands at a daunting US\$43.7 million. The repercussions of this disaster have been particularly harsh on the tourism sector, which has suffered immense losses. Accommodation facilities, wharves, and the homes of workers have been either destroyed or severely damaged, undermining the region's vital tourism infrastructure. Tonga's agricultural sector, a cornerstone of its economy, has also borne the brunt of this catastrophe. A staggering 85 per cent of agricultural households across the nation have been impacted to varying degrees, resulting in an estimated US\$20.9 million in damages. These losses encompass not only the destruction of crops but also the devastation of shallow reef fisheries, further compounding the agricultural sector's woes. Infrastructure in Tonga has not

been spared either, with an estimated US\$20.9 million in damage inflicted.

Roads, causeways, power supply networks, ports, marine infrastructure, and water supply systems have all suffered extensive harm. Additionally, the submarine cable, crucial for communication, has been severely affected, adding to the mounting infrastructure challenges. The cleanup efforts following the volcanic ashfall are expected to be both arduous and expensive. Preliminary estimates suggest that clearing ash from buildings and paved road infrastructure will require just under US\$5 million in funding. In the immediate aftermath of this catastrophe, the World Bank stepped in to provide crucial support to Tonga. An initial emergency funding of US\$8 million was extended to ensure that the nation had the necessary resources to restore basic services and provide aid to the Tongan families most severely affected by this disaster. These funds played a pivotal role in alleviating the immediate humanitarian crisis and initiating early recovery efforts in Tonga.

The devastating impact of the tsunami is a crisis that knows no boundaries, affecting both the main island and the outer islands of Tonga. The extent of the damage has left countless communities in disarray. Among the hardest-hit areas are the remote islands, where the destructive force of the waves left virtually no house standing. Mango Island, once a thriving community, now bears the scars of total destruction, with not a single house left standing. Fonoifua Island fares only slightly better, with a mere two houses miraculously escaping the wrath of the tsunami, while the rest lie in ruins. On Nomuka Island, extensive damage has been inflicted, with numerous houses bearing the brunt of the disaster. Turning the attention to the main island of Tongatapu, the western side has been profoundly affected, particularly in Kanokupolu, where the tsunami's fury left a grim trail of destruction. Here, 21 houses were completely obliterated, and an additional 35 houses suffered severe damage. The severity of the situation prompted the evacuation of affected communities to designated evacuation centers, underlining the urgent need for assistance.

In the central district, Kolomotu'a reported eight houses that were reduced to rubble, while 20 others sustained severe damage, further compounding the crisis. Even the tranquil island of 'Eua did not escape unscathed, with two houses completely destroyed and 45 more severely damaged.

As a testament to the widespread impact of this disaster, reports indicate a total of eight injuries on Nomuka Island, four minor injuries on Fonoifua Island, and two minor injuries on Tungua Island. The cumulative toll is staggering, with at least 293 houses bearing the scars of destruction or complete obliteration, the majority of which were located on the main island of Tongatapu.

The volcanic eruption and the tsunami affected roughly 85 per cent of its population (about 85,000 people) and causing an estimated \$90 million in economic losses. The disaster resulted in three fatalities, significant infrastructure damage, and isolated Tonga by severing its communication links for weeks. As aid agencies accessed the affected

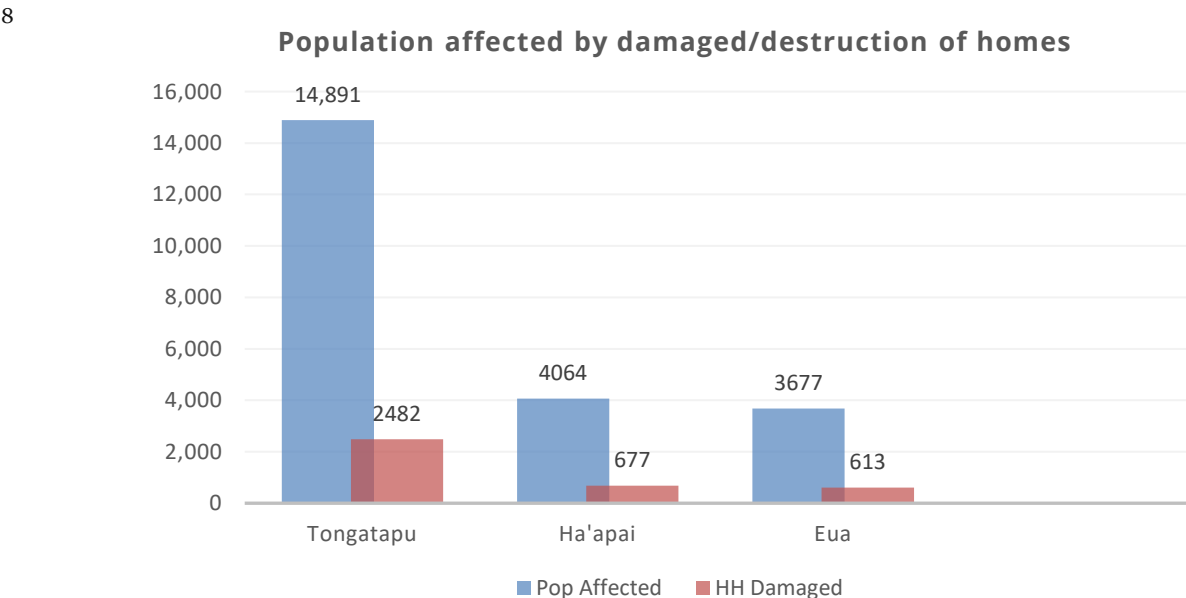
areas, the scale of devastation became clear, with the World Bank reporting \$90.4 million in direct economic damages, not accounting for the broader impact on tourism, agriculture and infrastructure.

Tonga's tourism sector, vital for its economy and hopeful of recovery post COVID-19, suffered immensely with damaged infrastructure in Nuku'alofa and beyond. Agriculture faced mixed impacts; while root crops were less affected, key fruits and vegetables experienced substantial damage. The simultaneous challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic further complicated relief efforts, even as international aid poured in from countries and organizations worldwide, including Australia, New Zealand, China, France and Japan along with significant contributions from the global Tongan diaspora.

Significant damage was reported across Tongatapu, 'Eua, and Ha'apai Islands, with around 600 structures severely affected, costing an estimated US\$43.7 million. The agricultural sector saw damages estimated at US\$20.9 million, affecting 85 per cent of agricultural households and devastating shallow reef fisheries. Infrastructure damage was similarly estimated at US\$20.9 million, affecting roads, power networks, ports and communication systems including the crucial submarine cable.

The World Bank's initial emergency funding of US\$8 million played a critical role in addressing the immediate humanitarian crisis and supporting early recovery efforts. The disaster's impact was profound across Tonga's main and outer islands with entire communities left in disarray. Remote islands like Mango and Fonoifua witnessed near-total destruction, while significant damage occurred in Tongatapu's western side and the central district of Kolomotu'a, emphasizing the urgent need for assistance and recovery.

Below chart presents the number of people affected by the tsunami and their homes damaged.



Summary of timeline

January 2022

- **16th:** TRCS began distributing prepositioned relief stocks to the west coast of Tongatapu. These stocks included shelter toolkits, tarps, kitchen sets, blankets, jerry cans, buckets, hygiene kits, and solar lanterns.

⁸ Ministry of Infrastructure Tonga – obtained after verbal discussion with the head of the MOI

- **21st:** Official launch of the MDRT0002 Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai IFRC emergency appeal to assist the affected population.

Early 2022

- **Distribution Challenges:** Due to COVID-19⁹ restrictions, distributions were often delivered in bulk to communities. Local distributions were undertaken by TRCS Branch Officers and, in some cases, by Town and/or District Officers. This method created difficulties in obtaining accurate distribution data.
- **Support for Students with Disabilities:** TRCS continued to support school students with disabilities by distributing water, food, family kits and stationery.

Mid-2022

- **Outer Islands Support:** For the outer islands, the primary method of distribution for in-kind donations was similar to that used in Tongatapu, focusing on bulk distribution due to logistical challenges.
- **Coordination with Government and Organizations:** TRCS engaged with the government and other organizations to coordinate recovery activities. This collaboration focused on several key sectors: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Health (particularly on COVID-19) shelter, cash assistance for vulnerable households, livelihood, and National Society Development (NSD).

Late 2022

- **Geographic Focus of Recovery Work:** The recovery work, part of the TRCS/IFRC appeal, concentrated on areas most impacted by the tsunami. This involved assessing the needs of the affected communities and prioritizing areas requiring immediate attention.
- **Implementation of Recovery Plans:** Ongoing Response and Early Recovery plans in various sectors (WASH, shelter, livelihood, etc.) began to be implemented, adapting to the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and ensuring equitable distribution of resources.

Early 2023

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the recovery efforts to assess the impact and make necessary adjustments.
- **Community Engagement:** Increased focus on community engagement to ensure the recovery efforts are aligned with the needs of the affected people, especially the most vulnerable groups.
- **Governmental Interaction:** Discussion with the Ministry of Infrastructure on the Household Recovery Program and way forward to support with the government-initiated recovery program.

Mid-2023

- **Progress Assessment:** Assessment of the progress made in recovery efforts across different sectors. This involved gathering feedback from the affected communities and collaborating organizations. The focus was on the Household Recovery Program and the Ministry of Infrastructure's shelter program.
- **Adjustment of Strategies:** Based on the discussion with government, TRCS and IFRC adjusted their strategies to address any gaps or emerging needs in the recovery process. This includes the strategy of providing cash support to the beneficiaries of the household rebuilt. Based on the current situation in Tonga, displaced people who are still waiting for the household rebuilt, TRCS with consultation with the government of Tonga initiate the support of Multi-Purpose Cash Grant.
- **First phase of CVA:** CVA Programming, identifying households for the recipient of the support and the program design for Cash Intervention.

⁹ [Tonga Extends Its Lockdown as Covid Cases Rise - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/13/world/asia/tonga-lockdown-covid.html)

Late 2023

- **Long-term Recovery Planning:** Planning for long-term recovery, CVA programming, implementation of CVA activities. Completion of the CVA activities.
- **Disaster Preparedness:** Disaster Preparedness training for TRCS and pre-disaster meeting with stakeholders.
- **Documentation and Learning:** Documentation of the lessons learned during the operation to improve future response and recovery efforts in similar situations.
- **Unified Plan:** Strategizing the Unified Plan and plans funds mapping for 2024.

Summary of response

TRCS, along with its Red Cross Red Crescent partners and other actors, took significant actions to respond to the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai (HTHH) disaster:

1. **Immediate Mobilization:** TRCS quickly mobilized around 100 volunteers and began distributing prepositioned relief items to the west coast of Tongatapu from 16 January 2022. This included shelter toolkits, kitchen sets, blankets, hygiene kits, PPE equipment, solar lanterns and more.
2. **Water Distribution:** The volunteers filled jerry cans with tap water and distributed them along with other



TRCS Volunteers in action during the response in 2022. (Photo © TRCS)

relief items. Tents were also erected for households in the most affected communities.

3. **Wider Area Support:** Distributions were extended to the Ha'apai group of islands and 'Eua village of Ohonua. This included collaboration with Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation (MORDI2) and the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO).

4. **Restoring Family Links (RFL):** Once the ash cloud cleared, TRCS used the support of TCC (Tonga Communications Company) to help 163 Tongan households make "safe and well" calls to families overseas and responded to enquiries from 42 international family members.

5. **Supporting Water Needs:** TRCS aided

in water distribution to affected communities, distributing 6,780 liters of water in the first four days post-eruption, benefiting over 10,000 people.

6. **COVID Response** – TRCS on the onset of the outbreak of COVID in Tonga supported the Ministry of Health in distributing PPE kits and specialized Hygiene Kits.
7. **Damage Assessments:** Joint initial damage assessments were conducted with NEMO, resulting in a comprehensive report released in Feb 2022.¹⁰
8. **Sanitation Facilities:** TRCS provided nine portable toilets/latrines for two affected communities, benefitting approximately 60 people.
9. **Distribution of Gifts in Kind:** TRCS received and distributed various items like bottled water, clothing, and family kits to affected areas, benefiting numerous communities.
10. **Support to Students with Disabilities:** TRCS continued supporting school students with disabilities by distributing essential items and stationery.

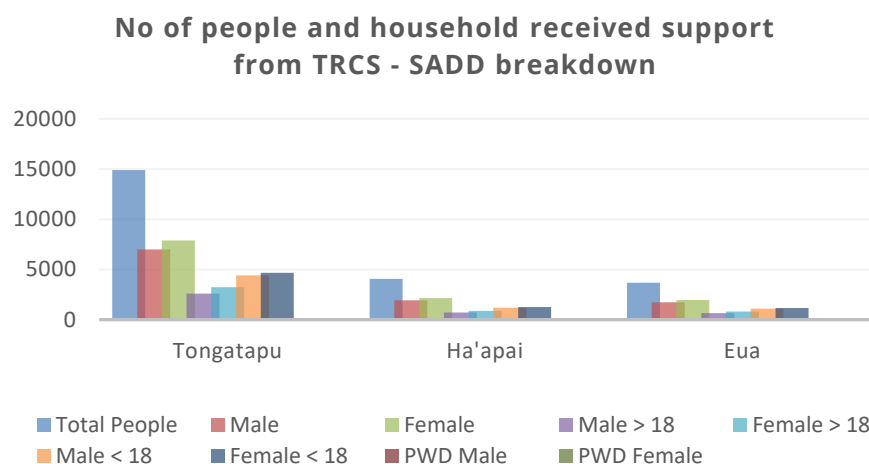
¹⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/tonga/tonga-national-emergency-management-office-nemo-situation-report-14-3-february-2022>

11. **Collaborative Recovery Efforts:** TRCS engaged with the government and other organizations to coordinate recovery activities across sectors like WASH, shelter and livelihood.

Recovery Phase:

1. **Transition to Recovery:** The transition to recovery was slowed by COVID-19, with planning commencing earlier but implementation starting in July and August 2022.
2. **Cash Programming:** The TRCS provided multi-purpose cash grants to 207 families affected by the tsunami – which part of the early recovery efforts. This support helps with expenses beyond shelter, like clothing, furniture, and schooling, aiding families in host accommodations or waiting for tsunami homes under different recovery programs. In addition, the TRCS provided cash grants to 244 individuals with disabilities to support for their recovery.
3. **Livelihood Support:** The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) implemented livelihoods support program to aid communities in their recovery efforts following the tsunami. As part of this initiative, the TRCS introduced a Cash for Work scheme, benefiting 55 individuals who received financial compensation for their contributions to rehabilitation activities. This program not only provided immediate financial relief but also fostered community involvement in the rebuilding process. In addition to monetary assistance, six communities were recipients of targeted support aimed at revitalizing their economic activities. This support included the provision of motorboat engines, enhancing fishing operations and facilitating access to broader markets. Furthermore, the distribution of agricultural seedlings was instrumental in jump-starting agricultural endeavors, enabling communities to resume farming activities and work towards food security and economic stability. Through these comprehensive efforts, the TRCS not only addressed immediate financial needs but also laid the groundwork for sustainable livelihood recovery and development.
4. **Household Recovery Program:** A joint initiative between TRCS and IFRC, focusing on areas most impacted by the tsunami; where TRCS assisted the government's project to rebuild residences, covering part of the financial requirements for affected households. 117 Households received 5 per cent of their contribution.
5. **Addressing Immediate Financial Needs:** TRCS responded to the diverse needs of households in evacuation centers or awaiting the completion of tsunami homes, adjusting their approach for broader targeting and inclusivity wherein the multipurpose Cash Grant supports 632 households who received financial assistance to support their daily needs during the waiting phase for tsunami home completion.
6. **National Society Development:** IFRC partnered with the TRCS to enhance national society development. This collaboration focused on strengthening the TRCS's Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) team, boosting disaster preparedness, and improving logistics mapping capabilities, thereby enhancing their operational efficiency and response readiness.

These comprehensive efforts by TRCS and its partners highlight a robust and adaptive response to the HTHH disaster, covering immediate relief and transitioning effectively into recovery phases.



The chart illustrates the support provided by the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) to individuals across three regions: Tongatapu, Ha'apai, and Eua, with a detailed breakdown of demographics including gender, age, and people with disabilities (PWD).

Tongatapu:

Tongatapu is the most affected area and received more aid due to the population, where 70 per cent of the population lives. It was also the most affected area during the 15 January 2022 Tsunami. The other islands were sparsely populated.

Here, the largest number of people received aid from TRCS. A considerable portion of the total beneficiaries are adults, with a fairly even distribution between males and females. The support to children under 18 is substantial as well, indicating a focus on aiding vulnerable young populations. Notably, both males and females with disabilities in Tongatapu were supported, reflecting TRCS's commitment to inclusivity.

In the wake of the disaster, Tongatapu emerged as the focal point for aid distribution, largely due to its significant population density, where 70 per cent of the country's populace resides. This area, bearing the brunt of the 15 January 2022 Tsunami, faced unprecedented challenges, necessitating a targeted and robust response from the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) and other aid organizations. The distribution of aid in Tongatapu was prioritized not only because of the sheer number of affected individuals but also in recognition of the acute vulnerability of these communities to the compounded impacts of natural disasters.

The aid distribution strategy implemented by TRCS in Tongatapu was marked by a commendable focus on reaching the most vulnerable segments of the population. A significant proportion of the aid beneficiaries were adults, reflecting the demographic composition of the affected areas. The aid was distributed with a mindful approach to gender balance, ensuring that both males and females received equitable support. This strategy underscores the importance of gender considerations in disaster response efforts, recognizing the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of different gender groups.

Ha'apai: In Ha'apai, the number of individuals assisted by TRCS was fewer compared to Tongatapu but still significant. Adult males and females received almost equal support, with male adults receiving slightly more. Support for children under 18 and PWD in Ha'apai shows TRCS's dedication to reaching all sections of the population, including the most vulnerable.

Eua: The region of Eua saw the least number of individuals receiving support from TRCS. However, the assistance was well-distributed across all demographic categories, including adults, children, and PWD ensuring that the aid reached a diverse group of beneficiaries.

Across all regions, TRCS has displayed a consistent effort to provide support to those in need, with particular attention to children and PWD. This approach aligns with the organization's principles of humanity and impartiality, ensuring that assistance is provided to all individuals without discrimination.

Overview of Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Country

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Society Movement in the country was spearheaded by the TRCS, which coordinated effectively with the IFRC and partner national societies (PNS), including the Australian and New Zealand Red Cross. The Australian Red Cross significantly contributed by providing funding and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) surge support during the response phase. Meanwhile, the New Zealand Red Cross enhanced the recovery efforts with technological assistance through 'IT in a Box' and an Information Management (IM) delegate.

Federation-Wide Funding Situation

The operation received multilateral and bilateral support from PNS and governments. Multilateral funding received from Australian Red Cross, New Zealand Red Cross, American Red Cross.

Operational risk assessment

The operational risk assessment for the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) identified several key challenges requiring immediate attention and strategic management, including new insights that highlight the complexity of disaster response efforts.

Initial Chaos from the Eruption

One of the initial risks was the volatile security environment due to the natural disasters. The chaos and confusion in the aftermath posed serious safety threats to volunteers and staff. The TRCS mitigated this by implementing strict security protocols, collaborating with local authorities, and providing comprehensive safety training to their personnel, ensuring safe and effective navigation through the challenging environment. Another significant challenge was the severe damage to road infrastructure, limiting access to affected areas, particularly remote islands. The TRCS addressed this by employing alternative transportation modes, like boats, and working with local infrastructure departments on road repairs.

Communication Breakdown and Decision-Making Process

A critical issue emerged due to the destruction of telecommunication infrastructure, leading to a significant communication breakdown which hampered coordination and information dissemination efforts. This was especially problematic as the Emergency appeal developed with minimal involvement from the National Society (NS) due to this breakdown in Tonga during the eruption. The TRCS combated this by working with TCC (Tonga Telecom Company) and establishing temporary communication hubs to maintain vital communication lines especially with the CCD and APRO.

The operational risk associated with the launch of an emergency appeal by the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) underscores a critical juncture in disaster response dynamics, particularly when a National Society faces significant challenges in its capacity to manage large-scale operations. In the initial stages of the emergency, TRCS found itself in a precarious position, unable to definitively accept or reject the initiation of an emergency appeal—or to opt for a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) operation—due to the overwhelming circumstances presented by the disaster.

Following extensive consultations and a consensus reached by the National Society, a decisive action was initiated, grounded in the principles of the movement's mandate and the established emergency response framework. This initiative was tailored to address the immediate needs arising from the crisis, ensuring a coordinated, effective, and swift response to support the affected communities, demonstrating the National Society's commitment to humanitarian principles and the well-being of those in distress. This decision-making process involved assessing TRCS's capacity to effectively implement a fully funded emergency appeal. Such assessments are pivotal, as they determine the feasibility of operational success, taking into account the National Society's resources, infrastructure, and logistical capabilities to manage the anticipated flow of aid and the execution of relief activities.

From TRCS's perspective, the acceptance of an emergency appeal signified a considerable commitment. It implied gearing up for a significant scale-up in operations, marshalling resources, and coordinating with various stakeholders—all while ensuring the timely and efficient delivery of aid to affected populations. This acceptance also meant navigating the operational and logistical challenges that come with managing a large influx of resources and coordinating disaster response efforts under the scrutiny and expectations of both local and international partners.

The IFRC's role, in conjunction with other partners in the Pacific, was to support TRCS through this process by providing available resources. This support was not limited to financial assistance but also encompassed technical guidance, capacity building (in the two years part of the OS), and logistical support to enhance TRCS's operational capabilities. Such backing is essential for ensuring that the National Society could meet the objectives of the emergency appeal without compromising the quality of response and relief operations.

Capacity of Tonga Red Cross Society

Critically examining this scenario reveals the intricate balance between operational readiness, the capacity of a National Society, and the decision-making processes of international bodies like the IFRC. It highlights the importance of preparedness, capacity building, and the need for clear communication and collaboration among all stakeholders involved in disaster response. The situation also underscores the necessity for continuous assessment and adaptation of strategies to meet the evolving needs of affected communities, ensuring that National Societies like TRCS are not only supported in times of crisis but are also empowered to lead and manage emergency responses effectively, reflecting a commitment to resilience and sustainability in disaster management practices.

Moreover, the initial resource strain, encompassing relief materials and human resources, raised concerns. The limited capacity of the NS and its branches, in terms of human resources, systems, and structures, further complicated these issues. To counteract this, the TRCS mobilized additional resources through international appeals and partnerships, demonstrating efficient resource management. Health risks due to ashfall and water contamination were prioritized, with measures like distributing protective gear and providing clean water supplies implemented. The global COVID-19 pandemic added an additional layer of complexity, which the TRCS navigated by adhering to stringent safety protocols to curb the virus's spread.

Lockdown COVID-19 and Access to Tonga (Outer Island)

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced significant operational hurdles for the TRCS, IFRC and PNS partners, compounding the complexities of disaster recovery efforts. The lockdown imposed in Tonga to curb the spread of the virus severely restricted the movement of international staff and hindered logistical mobilization, further challenging the implementation of response activities. TRCS personnel, confined largely to the main island due to these restrictions, found their capacity to travel and conduct field operations severely limited. This not only affected the timely execution of planned activities but also impacted the direct engagement with affected communities and the assessment of ongoing needs in the outer islands.

Information and Coordination

The challenge of lacking accurate population data presented a significant operational risk, particularly in the Pacific region where this issue is pervasive. The difficulty in gathering detailed demographic information, such as Sex, Age and Disability Data, stems from a combination of factors. One primary issue was the decentralized administration across the islands, with each island being overseen by a town officer under the patronage of local nobility. This setup complicated the standardization and homogenization of data collection processes within the country, as government agencies struggled to implement uniform data collection methodologies. The Ministry of Internal Affairs made strides towards addressing this challenge, initiating efforts to integrate such crucial information with the support of UN agencies and other partners. Nevertheless, the process of consolidating and standardizing population data was arduous and ongoing, indicating a systemic issue that requires sustained attention and resources to resolve. In the context of Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) activities, the IFRC and the TRCS have undertaken initiatives to collect data on affected households. This effort has led to the accumulation of valuable data within the repositories of TRCS and the Financial Service Providers (FSPs). Recognizing the sensitivity of this information, both IFRC and TRCS have implemented stringent data protection policies to safeguard the privacy and security of the collected data. They have also communicated these practices to the relevant ministries, ensuring a transparent and responsible approach to data handling. At the onset of operations, the availability of accurate and comprehensive data was a significant hurdle. The IFRC and TRCS, along with multiple engagements with various ministries, gradually retrieved necessary information. In these efforts, ITRCS and IFRC; several agencies, including Oxfam, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the World Health Organization (WHO), played pivotal roles in assisting the government to acquire secondary data during the early stages of disaster response. This collaborative approach highlights the importance of multi-agency cooperation in overcoming data collection challenges. It also underscores the need for a more systematic and coordinated effort to improve data management and accessibility in the Pacific, which is crucial for effective disaster preparedness, response and recovery. As the process of integrating and standardizing population data continues, the lessons learned from these challenges can inform future strategies to enhance the region's resilience to disasters.

Household Recovery Program and Challenges with Government Strategies

The Tonga Emergency Response faced a significant operational risk concerning the Household Recovery Program, specifically regarding potential modifications to the Government's 5 per cent Contribution Policy. This policy required affected households to contribute 5 per cent towards recovery efforts, a financial burden that could impede their ability to recover from the disaster. Recognizing this risk, the IFRC and the TRCS took proactive measures by establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with relevant stakeholders¹¹. This MOU was designed to protect the affected households from any financial strain resulting from policy changes. Despite efforts from the parliament and the royal family to persuade the government to waive this requirement, the situation remains unresolved. However, the MOU includes a provision that, should the 5% contribution be waived, the Ministry of Finance is obligated to reimburse the affected households, thus offering a safeguard against potential financial hardship.

Another notable challenge was the slow pace of the construction timeline for housing tsunami-affected populations. With only 50 per cent of the housing projects completed, the delays can be attributed to a range of issues faced by the government, including logistical challenges in transporting building materials to the islands, rough sea conditions, the performance of local contractors, and a labour shortage in the outer islands. These factors collectively contributed to the prolonged timeline for rebuilding efforts, further complicating the recovery process for the affected communities. In anticipation of these delays, and with a historical understanding of potential setbacks, the IFRC and TRCS adapted their operational strategy by introducing the Multi-Purpose Cash Grant (MPCG). This initiative was aimed at providing immediate financial assistance to families awaiting the completion of their permanent homes, thereby mitigating the impact of construction delays. The MPCG not only offered direct relief to those directly affected by the tsunami but also extended its reach to encompass a broader spectrum of the community facing the repercussions of the disaster.

This strategic adaptation underscores the importance of flexibility and foresight in disaster response operations. By implementing the MPCG, the IFRC and TRCS were able to provide timely and essential support to affected households, thereby facilitating a more effective and inclusive recovery process. Moreover, the proactive measures taken to address the potential financial implications of the Government's 5% Contribution Policy through the MOU demonstrate a commitment to protecting vulnerable communities from additional burdens during their recovery journey. These efforts reflect a comprehensive approach to risk mitigation, ensuring that the emergency response not only addresses immediate needs but also anticipates and prepares for potential challenges in the recovery phase. The targeting approach and criteria initially risked excluding the most vulnerable groups, such as women and disabled people. This was swiftly addressed by dispatching TRCS teams to communities for thorough assessments, ensuring inclusive support to all affected demographics.

Evacuation Centre

Finally, the construction of evacuation centres encountered delays in planning and community consultation. The TRCS overcame these by accelerating planning processes, engaging in community consultations, integrating Disaster Risk Reduction activities, and securing timely project completion through funding and resources. The NZRC pledged a bilateral funding for the construction of the evacuation centre.

In conclusion, the comprehensive approach to operational risk management adopted by the Tonga Red Cross Society, characterized by proactive strategies and collaborative efforts with various stakeholders, was crucial in addressing and mitigating the challenges posed by the volcanic eruption and tsunami. This multi-faceted strategy not only facilitated effective disaster response but also ensured the safety and well-being of the affected communities and the staff and volunteers engaged in relief efforts.

¹¹ MOU signed with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Finance

B. OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

The operational strategy for the HTHH Tsunami response, executed from January 2022 to January 2024, aimed at aiding 17,000 households impacted by the disaster in Tonga. This 24-month initiative, led by the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) with support from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), was structured into two phases, focusing on immediate relief, early recovery and long-term resilience.¹²

Phase One: Immediate Emergency Response and Early Recovery (January 2022 - Mid-2023)

This phase concentrated on immediate disaster relief and early recovery efforts. Key interventions included:

1. **Shelter Support:** Provision of emergency shelter was critical for ensuring safe living conditions immediately following the tsunami. This included distributing shelter kits and offering technical assistance for temporary housing construction.
2. **Livelihood and Basic Needs Assistance:** Programs were designed to restore economic stability and provide essential supplies for daily survival. This included distributing food, water and other basic necessities.
3. **Health Initiatives:** Addressing both physical and mental health needs, these initiatives included setting up mobile clinics (for PSS) and providing psychosocial support to cope with trauma.
4. **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Interventions to prevent disease spread and maintain hygiene standards were crucial, especially in temporary shelters and affected communities.
5. **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):** Implementation of DRR strategies aimed to enhance community resilience against future calamities, including educational programs and community drills.
6. **Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA):** Ensuring interventions met specific community needs and preferences, CEA was pivotal for effective and inclusive aid distribution.

Phase Two: Continued Relief and Recovery (Mid-2023 - January 2024)

The second phase focused on sustained relief efforts and recovery programs:

1. **Household Recovery Program:** Aimed to provide relief to 280 residences across Tongatapu, Eua, and Ha'apai, these programs offered financial assistance for rebuilding lives post-disaster.
2. **Multipurpose Cash Grant:** Supporting 632 households, this grant covered basic needs and facilitated recovery from the tsunami aftermaths.
3. **National Society Development Activities:** This included rebuilding the National Headquarters, repairing Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) buildings, and enhancing the first aid program. These initiatives were crucial for boosting TRCS's operational capabilities.
4. **Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) Program:** Implemented in two communities, this pilot program aimed at enhancing resilience and preparedness, including constructing and utilizing evacuation centers.
5. **Preparedness for Effective Response** – Continuity of the PER agenda with the emergency appeal focusing on the TRCS readiness in disaster response, operational plans, contingency planning and logistics mapping.
6. **Disaster Readiness Training and Response Process Development:** Training for staff in Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) and logistical strategies, such as boats for outer island chapters and a 3-tonne truck for logistics, were integral to efficient aid delivery.
7. **Long-term Integration into the Unified Plan:** While some activities aligned with the IFRC appeal closure, others extended beyond January 2024, integrating into Tonga's long-term development plans. Overall, this balanced strategy combined immediate relief with long-term development initiatives, demonstrating TRCS's commitment to building resilience and sustainability within the affected communities and enhancing the National Society's capacity for future responses.

¹² [Operation Strategy MDRT0002](#)

C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL REPORT

	Shelter, Housing and Settlements	People Reached	2747	Male	Female
				1346	1401

Objective:	<i>Communities in disaster and crisis affected areas restore and strengthen their safety, wellbeing and longer-term recovery through shelter and settlement solutions</i>
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Key indicators:	Indicator			Actual	Target
	<i># of households provided with emergency shelter assistance (tents, tarps, and toolkits) and households provided with essential household items (blankets, solar lanterns, kitchen sets)</i>			341	500
	<i># of households received 5% House Recovery Support</i>			117	280

Achievements

- Emergency Assistance to Households:** The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) effectively delivered essential emergency items to 341 households, accomplishing 70 per cent of the target. This included distributing tents, tarps, blankets, solar lanterns and kitchen sets, showcasing TRCS's capability for rapid response in crisis situations.

Table 1 - Summary of shelter support and essential HHI distribution

Division/ Village	HH		People		Immediate Needs assisted with distribution (NFIs)			
			Shelter Tarps	Tent	Shelter Toolkit	Kitchen Set	Blanket	Solar Lamp
Tongatapu	246	1,492	280	72	62	176	567	156
Ha'apai (including evacuees to Tongatapu)	57	273	84	-	48	57	140	50
'Eua	38	257	-	-	-	39	-	-
Sub-total	341	2,022	364	72	110	272	707	206

- Mobilization of Volunteers:** Approximately 100 volunteers were mobilized, demonstrating strong community engagement and participation in the relief efforts.
- Government Initiatives (Household Recovery Program):** TRCS worked alongside the government's Hunga-Tonga Hunga-Ha'apai Volcanic Eruption Tsunami Recovery (HTHVETR) program. This collaboration aimed to provide more resilient, accessible, and suitable housing for families affected by the tsunami. The Tongan government, through its Hunga-Tonga Hunga-Ha'apai Volcanic Eruption Tsunami Recovery (HTHVETR) program, is actively engaged in providing shelter for families whose houses were devastated by the volcanic eruption and tsunami. This recovery initiative focuses on enabling these families to access newly built, more resilient houses that are suitable and accessible for their specific needs. The Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI) plays a pivotal role in identifying eligible households for this assistance. An integral part of this program is the Government Housing Reconstruction Program, where affected households can

receive government aid for housing reconstruction. To qualify, these **households must contribute 5 per cent** of the total building cost, ensure that the land for the new house is registered under the head of the household, and sign an agreement with MOI. Parallely, the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), in coordination with the Ministry of Infrastructure, is contributing to this initiative. TRCS assists households in understanding the fund payout process, aids in opening bank accounts for heads of households, and facilitates the transfer of the 5 per cent building cost contribution. These transactions are carefully documented, with receipts provided to both the households and TRCS. The New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC) participated in this Household Recovery Program, supporting TRCS with allocated funds for Tonga's recovery bilaterally. This collaboration is part of a larger recovery program under an appeal. The MOI has



Tsunami House still on progress. (Photo Credit © TRCS 2023)

outlined a plan to provide shelter support to 380 households, with 280 receiving permanent shelter assistance and 100 obtaining container houses or other types of shelter. Households selected for this assistance are required to deposit a 5 per cent contribution towards the construction costs. However, in agreement with MOI, TRCS will bear the 5 per cent cost for selected households. The MOI finalized and validated a list on 20 April 2023, based on the severity of the damage caused by the disaster. Beneficiaries were required to deposit their 5 per cent contribution to a bank account set up by the Ministry of Finance (MOF). Originally, the MOI wanted immediate deposits while construction was ongoing, but later relaxed this requirement, allowing

beneficiaries to deposit at their convenience. TRCS, however, after consultation, agreed to transfer funds directly to the beneficiaries, who would then transfer it to the MOF's account, adhering to the principles of humanitarian cash programming. Through the IFRC emergency appeal, TRCS provided cash assistance for the construction of permanent houses to 117 households by contributing the required 5 per cent.

Moreover, the proactive and consultative approach adopted by the TRCS and the IFRC in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI) exemplifies a comprehensive engagement strategy aimed at addressing the recovery efforts. This collaboration went beyond merely focusing on the logistics of the household list and the intricacies of transferring the 5 per cent funds. It encompassed a thorough examination of various agreements (or understandings) that underpin the operational framework of the recovery efforts. Importantly, TRCS and IFRC leveraged this opportunity to advocate vigorously to the MOI, emphasizing the critical need to incorporate disability-friendly design principles in the construction of tsunami-resistant homes. This advocacy reflects a deep understanding of inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that all community members, especially those with disabilities, have safe and accessible living conditions post-tsunami.

Furthermore, the discussions with the project manager of the MOI addressed vital environmental and safety concerns, particularly the risks associated with constructing homes too close to the sea. This consideration is crucial in mitigating future disaster risks and ensuring that recovery efforts do not inadvertently increase vulnerability to tsunamis, climate change (rising sea levels) and other sea-related hazards. By engaging in these discussions, TRCS, IFRC, and MOI demonstrated a commitment to not only rebuilding lives but also to enhancing the resilience of communities through thoughtful, informed, and inclusive planning. This collaborative effort underscores the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to

disaster recovery, where logistical, social and environmental considerations are integrated into a cohesive strategy aimed at building back better and safer for all community members.

Table 2 - Summary of Household Recovery Contribution

No	Location (ISL)	No of Households	Transfer to Beneficiary	Total 5% In TOP	Total 5% in CHF
1	Nomuka	26	156,130.00	152,970.00	59,801.02
2	Fonoifua	16	96,080.00	95,920.00	37,652.50
3	Hihifo	2	9,666.50	9,646.50	3,563.90
4	Tungua	16	96,080.00	95,920.00	37,652.50
5	Kotu	5	30,025.00	29,975	11,074.26
6	Ha'afeva,	4	24,020.00	23,980	8,859.41
7	Kolovai	13	60,352.50	59,222.50	22,249.20
8	Ta'anga (Eua)	2	9,557.50	8,537.50	3,523.63
9	Nukunukumotu	8	48,040.00	47,960	17,718.82
10	Eueiki	4	24,020.00	23,980.00	11,074.26
11	Ohonua	21	100,353.75	98,143.75	36,998.11
	Total	117	654,325.25	646,255.25	250,167.62

Challenges

- Meeting Target Challenges:** In the wake of the disaster recovery efforts, the TRCS faced unforeseen hurdles that significantly impeded their goal to reach 500 households with essential aid and rebuilding assistance. Despite a well-orchestrated plan and the collaboration with international partners, TRCS's efforts were curtailed, achieving only 70 per cent of their target. This shortfall can be attributed primarily to the constraints imposed by the government's response to a concurrent crisis – the outbreak of COVID-19. The imposition of a lockdown to curb the spread of the virus had a domino effect on TRCS's operations. First and foremost, the lockdown severely restricted the mobility of TRCS volunteers, who are the backbone of their on-ground activities. The restrictions not only limited their ability to reach affected communities but also hampered the logistical operations essential for distributing aid. The challenge was further exacerbated by the disruption of inter-island transport, a critical artery for the delivery of supplies and personnel across Tonga's archipelago. The government's stringent criteria for operations during the lockdown meant that TRCS had to concentrate their efforts on the main island, leaving the peripheral islands and their inhabitants with delayed or diminished support. As the lockdown was eventually lifted, TRCS encountered another significant hurdle. The end of movement restrictions led to a sudden influx of unsolicited goods from various donors. While the intentions behind these donations were undoubtedly benevolent, the timing and volume of the goods presented a logistical nightmare for TRCS. The organization found itself in a position where it had to pivot from its original mission of providing tailored disaster recovery support to managing the distribution of a wide array of donated items. This shift was not just a matter of resource reallocation but also a significant diversion of focus from their planned appeal-based response activities. The government, grappling with the dual crises of post-disaster recovery and managing a public health emergency, leaned on TRCS to alleviate the burden of distributing these goods. This involvement, while critical, diverted TRCS's resources and attention from their primary objectives. The necessity to distribute unsolicited goods underscored the challenges of coordinating aid in the aftermath of a disaster, particularly when compounded by a pandemic. The situation revealed the complexities of disaster response in the modern world, where organizations like TRCS must navigate not only the direct impacts of natural calamities but also the indirect challenges posed by global health emergencies and the well-meaning but often uncoordinated influx of international aid. This scenario highlighted the need for

more strategic planning and coordination among all stakeholders involved in disaster response and recovery efforts. It underscored the importance of flexibility in disaster response strategies, the need for robust communication channels among NGOs, government bodies, and donors, and the crucial role of preparedness in managing the logistics of aid distribution. Despite these challenges, TRCS's efforts during this period demonstrated resilience and adaptability, qualities that are essential in the unpredictable landscape of disaster recovery and humanitarian assistance. This shortfall highlighted the challenges in scaling relief efforts to fully meet the needs in a disaster scenario. The challenges have been explained in detail at the *Operational Risk Assessment* section. For the Household Recovery Program, the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) faced significant challenges in meeting its target of assisting 280 households, ultimately providing support to only 117. This shortfall was due to a complex blend of circumstances. A notable factor was the emigration of many affected households to other countries, seeking stability and safety post-disaster. Additionally, complexities arose with extended family structures, requiring rectification and re-evaluation of beneficiary eligibility. Further complicating matters, some identified beneficiaries did not confirm their participation in the program. These varied reasons highlight the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of disaster recovery situations, where shifting demographics and family structures can significantly impact the execution of planned aid programs.

Table 3 - Summary Households who didn't participate in the Household Recovery Program

Reasons	Number of Households
Emigrated to another country	50
Extended family rectification	88
Did not participate	24

- Government Collaboration Challenges:** The most foremost challenge centers on the intricate dynamics of collaboration between various governmental units, specifically the Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI) and the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), and the IFRC in the aftermath of a disaster. This multi-layered interaction faced significant challenges that stemmed from issues of transparency and timeliness in information exchange, which are critical for the efficient execution of housing rebuild processes and the judicious management of financial resources. Initially, a pivotal contention arose regarding the government's insistence on a 5% contribution from households receiving container homes, which were not considered permanent housing solutions by the Shelter team in CCD, with advisement from the ARC. This stance was predicated on the assessment conducted by the APRO Shelter Coordinator, who evaluated the suitability of the container homes on-site. The NZRC played a crucial intermediary role, advocating for a streamlined process based on this assessment. Meanwhile, the TRCS pursued a waiver for the 5 per cent contribution, a move that necessitated a greater degree of political will, both from within the government and among the royalties, which still an outstanding issue. A further complication was the Ministry of Infrastructure's difficulty in finalizing the list of households eligible for the new homes. This delay was attributed to the sluggish pace of the government's assessment process, which commenced in November. The bureaucratic hurdles and red tape significantly slowed the negotiation process with the ministry and the TRCS, hindering the timely acceptance of proposals for collaboration. To navigate these challenges, the TRCS and IFRC Operations manager in Tonga undertook a concerted effort to foster open lines of communication and frequent meetings. This proactive engagement was instrumental in addressing the issues at hand, with the appointment of the TRCS Disaster Management Manager as a focal point in collaboration with the Director of the project marking a significant turning point. This strategic move improved the coordination and execution of the recovery program, highlighting the indispensable role of open communication and technical expertise. The narrative underscores the complexity of disaster recovery efforts, where the confluence of technical assessments, political considerations, and bureaucratic procedures can impede progress. The resolution of these initial difficulties through enhanced transparency in information exchange and the establishment of clear communication channels exemplifies the necessity

of adaptive strategies and collaborative leadership in overcoming obstacles to disaster recovery. The improved collaboration not only facilitated a more efficient rebuilding process but also served as a testament to the value of persistence, negotiation and the strategic alignment of roles and responsibilities among diverse stakeholders in the face of adversity.

- **Logistical and Operational Challenges:** The Tonga Red Cross Society's (TRCS) role in the government's housing assistance program necessitated detailed coordination, particularly in managing complex financial transactions and adhering to the government's stipulated criteria. A major obstacle in this process was the limited presence of Financial Service Providers (FSP) in the outer islands, which posed a challenge for the cash assistance program's implementation. To address this, TRCS strategically partnered with the Tonga Development Bank, the only bank with access to these remote areas. This collaboration involved securing exceptional approval from APRO and Geneva to ensure transparency and integrity in the cash distribution process. Additionally, the TRCS team, with support from the surge cash delegate (Operations Manager from Philippines), developed innovative solutions in collaboration with the bank. These included efficiently managing the beneficiary database, conducting field trips to verify the list of recipients, and maintaining effective communication with the affected communities. This comprehensive approach not only streamlined the financial aspects of the program but also ensured that the aid reached its intended recipients in a transparent and accountable manner.
- **Monarchy based land endowment:** An additional challenge in Tonga's Household Recovery Program was the complexity of the monarchy-based land endowment system, which complicated the identification of actual land and homeowners. This system, unique to Tongan culture and law, often resulted in a mismatch between the landowners and the occupants of the houses. Consequently, the government, particularly the Ministry of Infrastructure, faced the intricate task of ensuring that recovery support reached the rightful beneficiaries. This involved navigating a maze of customary land ownership rights, verifying legal titles, and resolving potential conflicts between landowners and residents. The situation underscored the necessity for a sensitive and thorough approach in disaster recovery programs, particularly in contexts with unique land tenure systems, to ensure equitable aid distribution.

Lessons Learned

- **Communication and Pre-Disaster Planning:** The early phase underscored the importance of robust communication systems and pre-disaster planning for distribution. These measures are essential for a consistent and rapid response in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. This was addressed during the capacity building process and the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) activities and workshop held in October 2023. A logistics mapping, a pre-positioning strategy and volunteer management system was developed during this process.
- **Management of Unsolicited Gifts:** The operation experienced mixed impacts from unsolicited gifts, particularly those received months after the eruption. These posed storage challenges, distribution time constraints, and environmental concerns. Better messaging and guidelines on donations could reduce these adverse impacts. This remains an issue and highlights to the national society.
- **Adapting to Community Needs and Contributions:** The varied nature of community contributions to housing and the discrepancies between government records and actual contributions posed significant challenges. Flexibility and sensitivity to community circumstances are essential in devising and implementing assistance programs.
- **Avoiding Over-Complexity in Assistance Programs:** The attempt to extend the approach of providing cash payments equivalent to the government's suggested five percent contribution to a broader range of housing types revealed the potential for over-complicating the procedure and causing community dissatisfaction. Simplifying and standardizing assistance programs can help avoid these issues.
- **Complex Monetary Process in Tonga:** A critical lesson learned during the recovery phase of the HTHH Tsunami response was navigating the complexities of financial service providers in Tonga. The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) developed an innovative approach to address the cash transfer process, particularly in collaboration with

the Tonga Development Bank. TRCS and IFRC recognized the challenges in the existing cash transfer process, especially concerning the limitations and inefficiencies of local financial services. The aim was to streamline and secure the transfer of funds meant for the reconstruction efforts. TRCS and IFRC collaborated closely with the Tonga Development Bank to devise a more efficient and transparent cash transfer mechanism. This involved setting up a system that would facilitate the smooth transfer of funds from donors directly to the beneficiaries. The Tonga Development Bank played a pivotal role in ensuring that the cash transfers were not only efficient but also adhered to the guiding principles of humanitarian aid. They provided necessary banking infrastructure and services that catered specifically to the unique requirements of the program.

- **Proactive Government Engagement:** The collaboration challenges encountered underscore the necessity of proactive and consultative engagement with government agencies. Early and ongoing dialogue with relevant authorities can preempt misunderstandings and bureaucratic delays, ensuring a more streamlined and effective response. By prioritizing transparent communication and collaboration from the outset, organizations can better align their recovery objectives with governmental regulations and expectations, facilitating smoother implementation of recovery programs.
- **Environmental Considerations in Reconstruction:** The recovery process revealed the importance of integrating environmental and safety concerns into reconstruction efforts. TRCS's initiatives highlighted the need for disaster recovery plans to incorporate environmental sustainability and risk mitigation, especially in areas vulnerable to future natural disasters. This includes assessing the risks of constructing near the sea and other vulnerable areas, ensuring that rebuilding efforts do not inadvertently increase the community's vulnerability to future disasters.
- **Advocacy for Inclusivity:** The collaboration between TRCS and the Ministry of Infrastructure brought to the forefront the significance of inclusivity and accessibility in recovery efforts. The mutual understanding on the importance of advocating for disability-friendly design principles represents a crucial step forward. Ensuring that reconstruction efforts cater to the needs of all community members, including those with disabilities, underscores a commitment to equitable and compassionate recovery processes.
- **Strategic Financial Service Provider Partnerships:** The Household Recovery Program's partnership with the Tonga Development Bank exemplifies the benefits of engaging with financial service providers to overcome logistical and financial challenges in remote areas. This collaboration marked the introduction of an innovative, cash-based intervention in Tonga, demonstrating the potential for financial partnerships to offer flexible, responsive solutions to the unique challenges faced in disaster-stricken regions. Such strategic alliances can enhance the efficiency and reach of recovery programs, providing affected communities with the resources they need to rebuild.

In conclusion, while the TRCS's response to the HTHH Tsunami showed commendable achievements, it also faced significant challenges and provided valuable lessons for future disaster response and recovery.

 Livelihoods¹³		People Reached	618	Male	Female
				340	278
Objective:	<i>Communities, especially in disaster and crisis affected areas, restore and strengthen their livelihoods</i>				
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual		Target	
	<i># of Number of Boats Given to the Community</i>	2		2	

¹³ The TRCS did some Livelihood activities during the recovery activities that requested to be included.

of Communities provided Agricultural tools and seeds

6

6

Achievements

In the wake of the catastrophic tsunami that struck on 15 January 2022, two resilient communities, Ha'afeva and Tungua, found themselves grappling with the immense devastation wreaked upon their lives and livelihoods. Among the hardest hit were the local fishermen, who not only lost their homes but also their boats and essential tools necessary for their trade. In a remarkable display of humanitarian support and recovery efforts, the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) stepped in to provide a lifeline to these beleaguered communities.

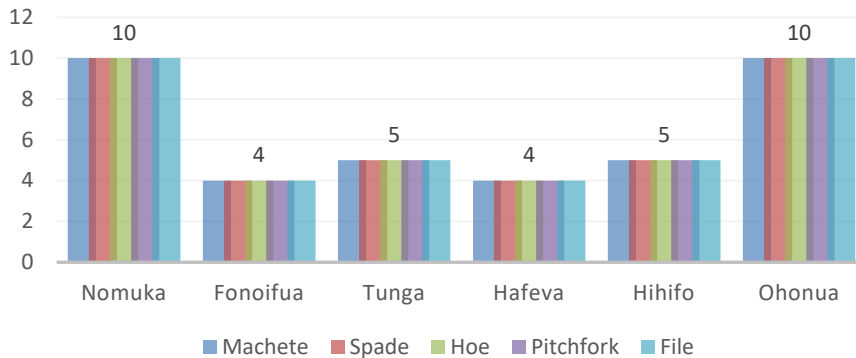
Recognizing the critical need to help these communities rebuild their lives and regain their self-sufficiency, TRCS embarked on a mission to restore their shattered livelihoods. The TRCS, with unwavering commitment and dedication, distributed essential resources that would prove instrumental in facilitating their recovery.

In a significant achievement, TRCS provided outboard engines to the communities of Ha'afeva and Kotu, equipping them with powerful 40HP engines that would enable them to resume their livelihoods as fishermen. This crucial support ensured that these communities could once again take to the seas, not only providing sustenance for themselves but also contributing to the local economy and food security.

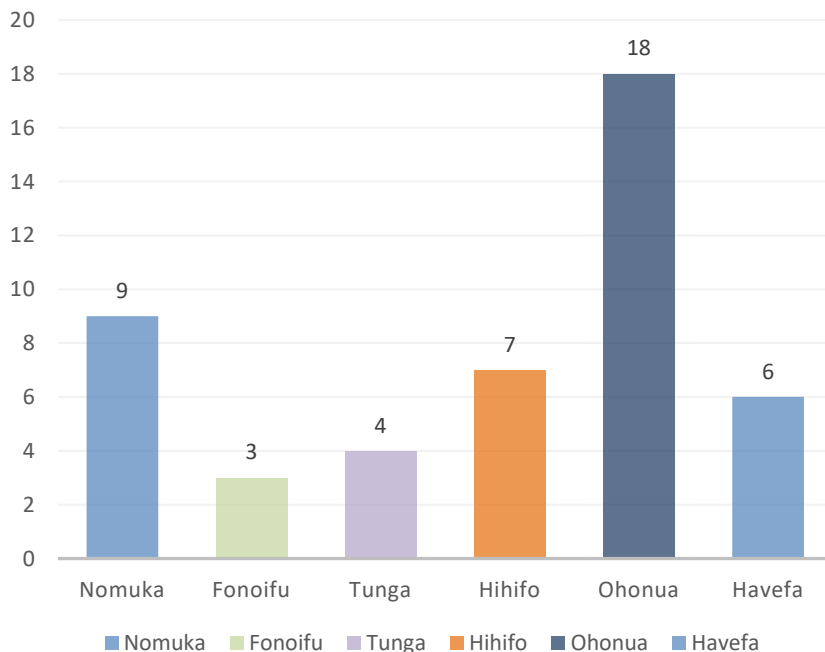
Furthermore, recognizing the importance of agriculture in these communities, TRCS extended its support by distributing gardening tools and seedlings to multiple affected areas. These included Nomuka, Fonoifua, Tungua, Ha'afeva, 'Ohonua in 'Eua, and Hihifo in Ha'apai. This strategic assistance aimed to revitalize local agriculture, empower individuals to grow their food, and foster self-reliance within these communities.

By providing these essential resources and tools, TRCS played a pivotal role in helping the affected communities regain their economic independence and self-sufficiency. These achievements stand as a testament to the

Agricultural Tools Provided



Number of Household Received Seedling



resilience and determination of both the affected populations and the humanitarian organizations that worked tirelessly to support their recovery.

Challenges and Lessons Learned on Livelihoods Programming within TRCS

The Tonga Appeal represented a comprehensive effort to address the aftermath of the disaster, encompassing various sectors including livelihood activities, which posed significant challenges for the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS). Given its limited prior experience and lack of experts in the domain of livelihood support, TRCS faced hurdles in implementing effective livelihood recovery strategies. The support from the CCD Suva was minimal during the crucial initial and mid-recovery phases, and there was a notable absence of livelihood specialists from partner organizations to guide and assist in these efforts.

Despite these constraints, TRCS took proactive steps to mitigate the situation. They engaged in extensive discussions with affected communities to better understand their needs and tailor support accordingly. This grassroots approach, although beneficial, highlighted the organization's gaps in expertise and preparedness for addressing complex livelihood challenges.

A key lesson learned from this experience is the importance of building internal capacities within TRCS, particularly in understanding, planning, and implementing livelihood mechanisms and responses. It became evident that having a dedicated team or mechanism within the CCD to specifically focus on livelihood aspects would greatly enhance the effectiveness of disaster recovery efforts. This specialized focus would not only facilitate targeted support for affected populations but also prepare TRCS to respond more adeptly to future disasters with a significant livelihood component.

Moving forward, it is imperative for TRCS and its partners to invest in training and developing expertise in livelihood recovery strategies. This includes fostering partnerships with organizations that possess specialized knowledge in livelihood support, ensuring that future appeals and recovery efforts are well-equipped to address the multifaceted challenges of disaster recovery. Additionally, integrating livelihood considerations into disaster preparedness plans and establishing a pool of livelihood specialists within the network could significantly improve the resilience and recovery capacity of affected communities. TRCS also needs to engage with various stakeholders and ministries to raise awareness about their mandates and what is available as part of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. This involves organizing workshops, meetings, and public awareness campaigns to educate government officials, community leaders, and the public on the range of services and support TRCS provides, including disaster response and preparedness, health and welfare services, and community resilience programs. By fostering a deeper understanding and collaboration with these entities, TRCS can enhance its visibility, strengthen partnerships, and secure support for its initiatives, thereby ensuring a more coordinated and effective response to the needs of the communities it serves. Establishing strong relationships with stakeholders is essential for advocacy, securing resources and enhancing the overall impact of TRCS's humanitarian efforts within Tonga and beyond.

In conclusion, the Tonga Appeal underscored the necessity for TRCS to deepen its understanding and capacity in livelihood recovery. Embracing these lessons will not only enhance TRCS's response to future disasters but also ensure that recovery efforts are more holistic, sustainable, and aligned with the needs of the communities they serve.

	Multi-purpose Cash	People Reached	5127	Male	Female
				2565	2562

Objective:	<i>Households are provided with unconditional/multipurpose cash grants to address their basic needs</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i># of households receiving MPCG (early recovery)</i>	209	209
	<i># of people with disability received cash</i>	244	244
	<i># of people received cash for work</i>	55	55
	<i># households receiving multipurpose cash grants to address their basic needs</i>	632	632

Achievement

Cash and Voucher Assistance

Early Recovery Multi-Purpose Cash Grant - The Early Recovery Multi-Purpose Cash Grant (MPCG) initiative by the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), in conjunction with the IFRC was a strategic response to the immediate and evolving needs of communities affected by the disaster, exacerbated by the significant ashfalls. In the aftermath, the disruption was palpable across the islands, with the main island experiencing delays in shop openings and the outer islands facing a complete severance of their supply chain systems. The initial months saw the government and various agencies stepping in to fulfil the basic needs of the populace, highlighting the critical situation that necessitated external support.

Table 4 - Number of Households reached through MPCG assistance during Early Recovery

Island	Community	Households Received MPCG		# of People in the Household	# of Males	# of Females
		1 st Round	2 nd Round			
Tongatapu Main Island	Nukunukumotu	9	9	53	26	26
	Tukutonga	14	14	98	49	57
	Kolomatu'a	14	14	151	60	89
	Sopu	11	11	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Ahau	6	6	33	15	18
	Kanokupolu	25	25	140	73	67
Ha'apai Group of Islands	Nomuka	35	40 ¹⁴	196	91	99
	Fonoifua	17	17	96	57	43
	Tungua	16	16	91	43	48
	Ha'afeva	6	6	34	16	18
	Hihifo	11	11	75	41	32
Eua	Ohonua	40	40	225	117	107

¹⁴ The additional five beneficiaries did not come forward in the initial registration process and then was included in the second round and the received both tranches together.

Total	204	209	1192	588	604
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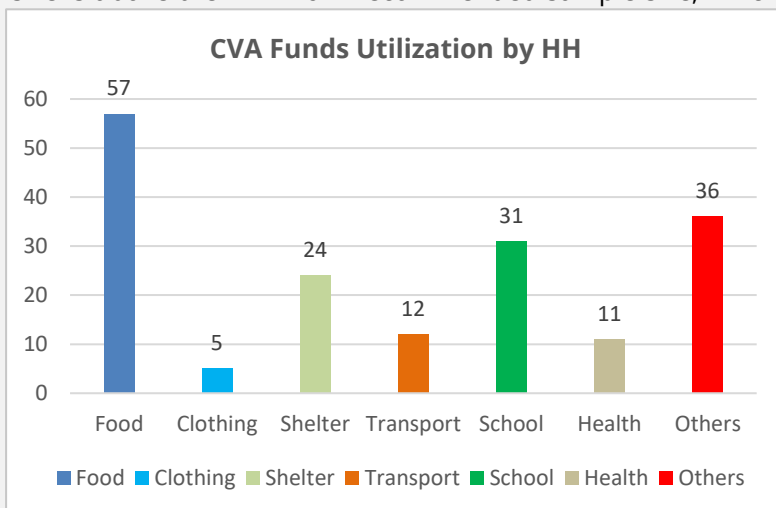
As the communities began to stir towards recovery four to six months post-disaster, local markets in Tongatapu and selected areas in the outer islands gradually resumed operations. Although their services were not at pre-disaster levels, the drive to renew business and cater to the needs of the population was evident. It was within this context that TRCS, supported by IFRC, embarked on a mission to deliver cash assistance directly to the people most in need. Targeting 209 selected households across 12 communities in Tongatapu, Ha'apai, and Eua, the initiative aimed to address the immediate and slightly longer-term needs created by the disaster.

Between September and November 2022, dedicated TRCS staff and volunteers conducted nine field trips to both the Outer Islands and Tongatapu, delivering cash assistance in envelopes to affected households. This direct financial support was meticulously planned in two phases to ensure the aid was both timely and effective. The first phase provided each household with an initial sum of 500 TOP, aimed at covering immediate basic needs and helping families regain their footing. The subsequent phase, involving an additional 350 TOP per household, was specifically designed to aid in the replacement of household items lost to the tsunami, thereby supporting the more prolonged recovery phase.

In total, each household benefited from an allocation of 850 TOP, a sum that represented more than just financial aid: it symbolized hope and a step towards normalization. The dual-phase cash distribution strategy adopted by TRCS and IFRC underlines a nuanced understanding of disaster recovery, acknowledging the need for immediate relief while also paving the way for rebuilding and resilience. This approach not only alleviated immediate financial pressures on affected families but also injected much-needed liquidity into the local economy, encouraging the revival of local markets and businesses. By doing so, TRCS and IFRC demonstrated a commitment to supporting not just the short-term survival but also the long-term recovery and resilience of disaster-stricken communities, reinforcing the role of cash assistance as a vital tool in comprehensive disaster recovery efforts.

PDM Outcomes for the Early Recovery Multi-Purpose Cash Grant

The analysis of the Early Recovery Multipurpose Cash based on a Post Distribution Monitoring process reveals clear spending priorities among the 176 surveyed households (HH). The 176 sample size is above the minimum recommended sample size, which is 119 for 209 HHs population, 5% margin of error, 90% confidence level, and 50% response distribution. The analysis of the Early Recovery Multipurpose Cash based on a Post Distribution Monitoring process reveals clear spending priorities among the 176 surveyed households (HH). The 176-sample size is above the minimum recommended sample size, which is 119 for 209 HHs population, 5% margin of error, 90% confidence level, and 50% response distribution.

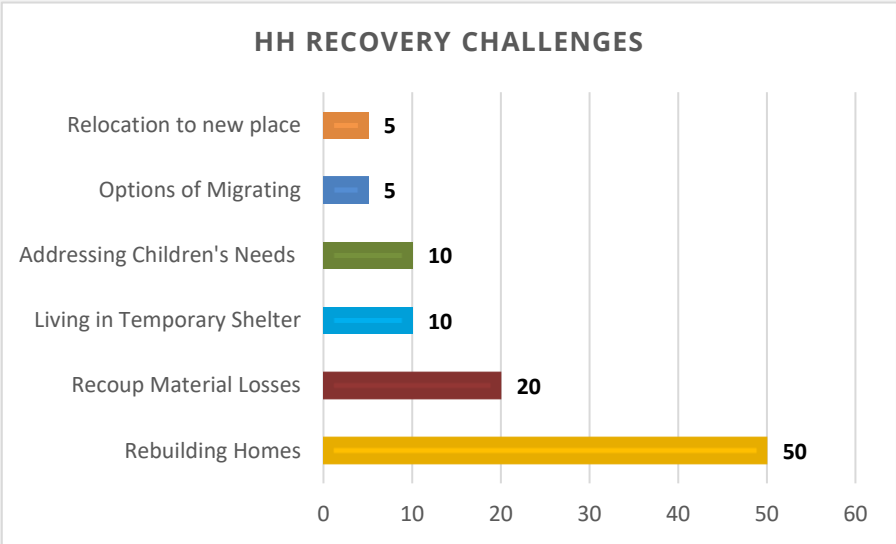


The data indicates that the largest proportion of cash was spent on food, reflecting the immediate necessity for sustenance following the disaster. This prioritization underscores the critical importance of ensuring food security in the early stages of recovery.

Second to food, the funds were notably used for school-related expenses. This highlights the value that the community places on education and the determination to maintain schooling for children

despite the disaster's challenges. In terms of the 'Other' category, which displays a significant portion of expenditure, it was reported that many households allocated the cash towards activities that would support their livelihoods. This could include investing in tools, seeds, or materials necessary to resume or initiate income-

generating activities, showcasing the community's forward-thinking approach towards sustainable recovery and self-sufficiency. Overall, the chart and the provided context reflect a community that, while grappling with the immediate effects of a disaster, is also keenly focused on recovery and resilience, particularly in terms of basic needs and the continuity of children's education. The utilization of funds for livelihoods suggests an inherent community drive towards long-term recovery and economic stability.



Based on the provided chart (HH recovery challenges) and information, an analysis of the most pressing recovery challenges faced by recipients of the Multipurpose Grant reveals the following:

- **Rebuilding Homes:** Half of the households surveyed indicated that their most significant challenge is rebuilding their homes. This accounts for the largest portion of the chart at 50%, reflecting a primary concern for stable, long-term housing solutions following the disaster.

- **Recoup Material Losses:** The

second most significant challenge, comprising 20% of responses, is the recouping of material losses. This highlights the financial strain on households as they strive to replace possessions and essential items lost during the disaster.

- **Living in Temporary Shelter:** Representing 10% of the households, the challenge of living in temporary shelters while awaiting government support is notable. This suggests a degree of uncertainty and discomfort associated with temporary living conditions and a desire for more permanent solutions.
- **Decision to Emigrate:** A smaller segment, at 5%, are faced with the difficult decision of whether to stay in Tonga or emigrate. This reflects the broader social and economic impact of the disaster, influencing life-altering decisions for affected families.
- **Addressing Children's Needs and Livelihood:** Equally at 10%, households prioritize addressing their children's needs, including education and wellbeing, alongside concerns for restoring their livelihood. This dual focus indicates the importance of ensuring both the immediate welfare of children and the financial stability of the family unit.
- **Adaptation to New Conditions:** The remaining 5% of households are challenged with adapting to new conditions after being relocated. This underscores the difficulties that come with adjusting to new environments and rebuilding community ties.

In conclusion, the Charts and accompanying data suggest that while housing is the most pressing issue for the majority, there are significant concerns about material loss, temporary living conditions, the wellbeing of children, livelihood restoration, and the challenges of relocation and potential emigration. These insights could inform targeted support and policymaking to address the varied needs of the affected population.

Multipurpose cash support to people with disability: During the early recovery phase of the appeal, the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusivity (PGI), particularly in supporting people with disabilities (PwD). In collaboration with the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO), TRCS successfully assisted a total of 244 PwD across various islands. This targeted support involved a one-time payment of 350 TOP per individual, significantly contributing to addressing their immediate special needs.

The financial assistance was thoughtfully designed to cater to specific essential items, such as special medicine, food, and equipment (accessibility) required by PwD. This reflected TRCS's acknowledgment and effort to address

the unique challenges faced by PwD in the aftermath of the disaster. Often, their needs are overlooked since most of the time the focus is primarily on general relief items.

The provision of this aid highlights TRCS's dedication to ensuring that all members of the community, regardless of their abilities, receive the necessary support during critical times. The process of identifying and reaching out to these individuals was facilitated by NEMO, which provided TRCS with a comprehensive list of PwD across different islands. This collaboration not only ensured that the aid reached its intended recipients efficiently but also underscored the importance of inter-agency cooperation in disaster response and recovery efforts. By focusing on the most vulnerable and often overlooked segments of the population, TRCS reinforced its commitment to an inclusive and comprehensive approach in humanitarian aid.

Table 5 - Number of PWD reached through CVA Assistance

Communities	Number of People with Disability
Tongatapu OTA¹⁵ Students	41
Tongatapu	153
Ha'afeva	2
Tungua	1
Nomuka	11
Fanciful Org	4
Hihifo	12
Eua	20
Total	244

Cash for Work: The main island Tongatapu and several outer islands were severely affected by the eruption and tsunami, faced significant environmental challenges, particularly with a polluted lake that impacted both the livelihoods and psychosocial recovery of the community. The Tongan Red Cross Society (TRCS) staff in Nuku'alofa collaborated with local communities and government stakeholders to initiate a cleanup and restoration project in the area, focusing on the lake and its surroundings.

This initiative was part of a pilot Cash for Work (CfW) program, not originally planned in the appeal's development but introduced to address the needs of one of the most disaster-affected outer islands. The program aimed to provide social assistance by offering paid work under 'decent work' conditions for community members affected by the disaster while cleaning the affected area from debris. The cleanup involved removing tsunami debris from the freshwater lake and depositing it in a purpose-built pit away from the lake and community, using an excavator for heavy lifting.

Participants engaged in cleanup and restoration activities, receiving 60¹⁶ TOP with an average of 55 people working daily, the average payout is 3,300 TOP per day. The work schedule was designed to accommodate participants' other responsibilities, with workdays lasting five hours and starting early in the morning. This allowed individuals to continue their normal activities at home, on farms, or at sea. The CfW initiative, though short in duration, provided essential local employment, environmental restoration, health risk mitigation, and improved community well-being. The restored lake now serves as a vital resource for the community's livelihoods, livestock, and as a source of washing water. At the end of the CfW programme TRCS held a PSS activity for all age groups to celebrate the achievement of the clean-up of this area.

¹⁵ OTA – Tonga Red Cross School for disabled Children and Adults with Disability

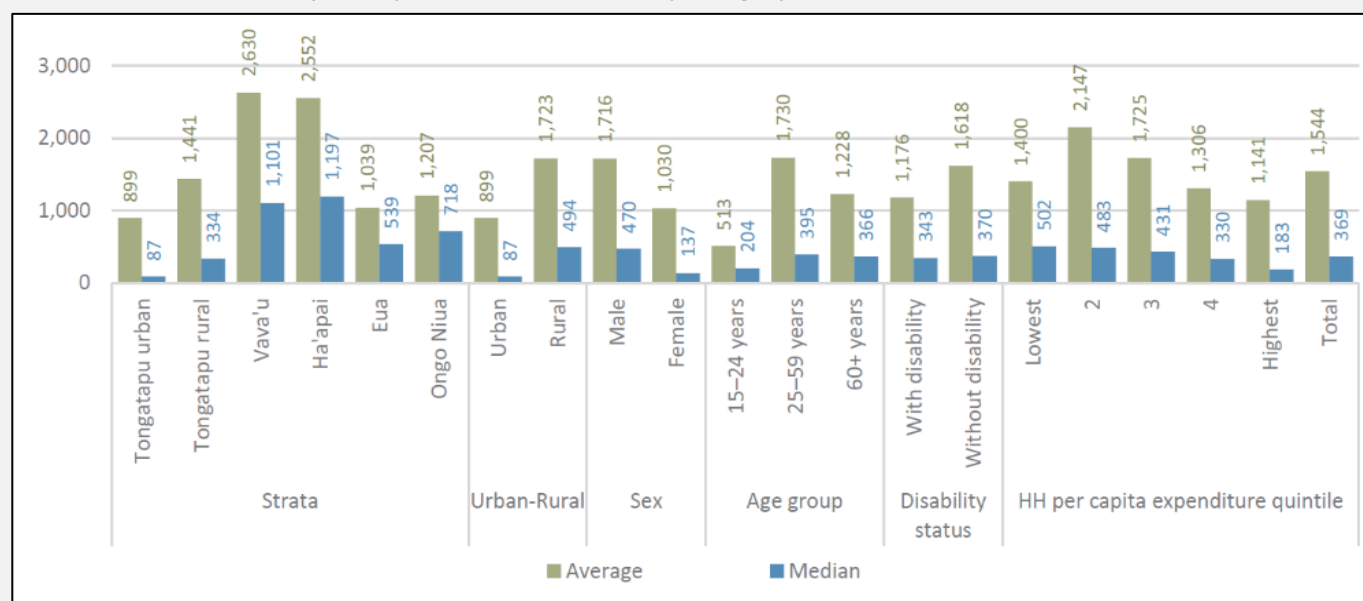
¹⁶ Tonga lacks specific guidelines for minimum wages. The decision to set 60TOP as the rate was based on the TRCS volunteer daily rate of 55TOP, with a median calculation leading to the 60TOP rate

Multipurpose Cash Grant: In response to the devastation caused by the tsunami and the functionality of the market system in the targeted area, the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) has initiated a comprehensive support program, providing multi-purpose cash grants (MPCG) to cover basic needs of 632 affected families. This initiative encompasses a wide range of beneficiaries, including families awaiting the completion of their new tsunami homes under the Household Recovery Program, recipients of the 5% contribution grant, and those allocated container homes. With ongoing shelter construction, many families are temporarily living with host families or in temporary accommodations. These communities experienced the adverse impact of the tsunami, although their homes may not have been entirely destroyed. Nevertheless, the tsunami's aftermath has posed significant challenges to their recovery efforts, making the MPCG a valuable resource for them. Their needs, which were voiced in various town hall meetings, include not only housing but also essentials for daily living and recovery.

The MPCG is designed to support these families in their time of need, offering financial assistance that extends beyond mere shelter construction. This aid is particularly crucial, as many families, despite having some form of shelter, are struggling with the aftermath of the tsunami. Moreover, the Multipurpose Cash Grant (MPCG) extends its support to communities that continue to grapple with the lingering effects of the tsunami, particularly those who were not included as recipients of the newly constructed tsunami homes. The program aims to alleviate the financial burden on these families, helping them rebuild their lives and communities. The cash grants are intended for various expenses, including clothing, furniture, and schooling costs, addressing aspects of recovery not covered by the initial House Recovery Contribution.

Based on data from the Tonga 2021 Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report¹⁷ shows that a significant percentage of households in Tonga depend on income from primary activities like agriculture and fishing. The average monthly HH income from primary activities was TOP 1,544 while the median was TOP 369. No country statutory minimum wage for Tonga.

Using the above reference and with the approval and support from Tonga Cash Community of Practice, TRCS calculated the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) which amounted to TOP 1,053 for a HH with family of 5 member. The calculation is available here in this link : - [TRANSFER VALUE CALCULATION](#). This MEB then become the basis for Multipurpose Transfer Value where TRCS decided to cover 35 per cent which equalling to 395.82 TOP which then rounded up to TOP 400. This transfer value is aligned the median income from Average and median monthly household income from primary activities as shown by the graph below.



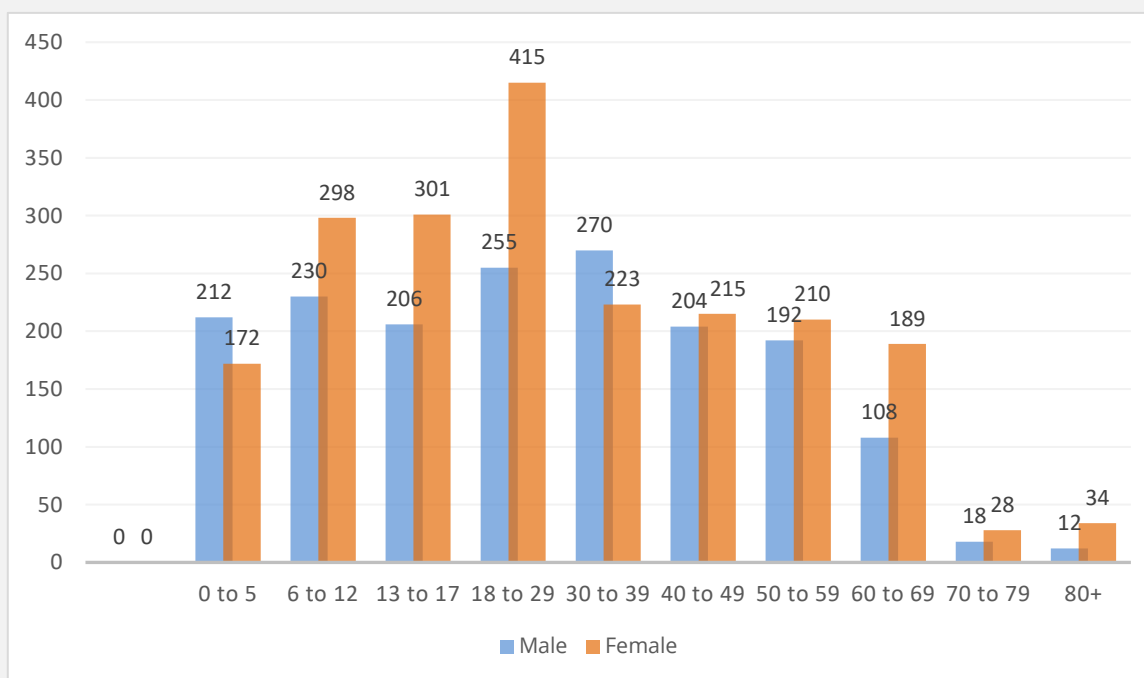
Average and median monthly household income from primary activities

¹⁷ [Tonga 2021 Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report](#)

¹⁸This calculation ensures the assistance provided is both meaningful and relevant to the affected families' economic situations. The disbursement of funds was conducted in October and December 2023, facilitated through the Tonga Development Bank, which has been instrumental in this process. An extension of the agreement with the bank and new approvals from APRO and Geneva underscore the collaborative effort involved in this significant humanitarian endeavour. This program not only offers immediate financial relief but also represents a strategic and thoughtful approach to disaster recovery in the Pacific, setting a precedent for future initiatives.

The process of selecting households to receive the Multipurpose Cash Grant (MPCG) was a meticulous and thorough one, involving collaboration between various stakeholders. Initially, the eligible households were identified from the existing list of beneficiaries under the Household Recovery Program and additional lists provided by Town Officers representing their respective districts and islands. To ensure accuracy and validity, the TRCS team embarked on a comprehensive verification process. They conducted on-site visits to individual households, meticulously collecting data using the KOBO Collect data collection system. In more remote areas, where physical visits were challenging, dedicated TRCS volunteers reached out to these households via telephone to gather the necessary information. Subsequently, the collected data underwent rigorous verification by the Financial Service Provider (FSP) in collaboration with TRCS. This involved cross-referencing the provided information with their database to confirm the eligibility of the selected households. Impressively, it was found that 78 per cent of these households already had bank accounts with the Tonga Development Bank, the designated FSP for the MPCG distribution. However, for those without existing accounts, the concerted efforts of Town Officers and TRCS volunteers facilitated the opening of new bank accounts, ensuring that all eligible beneficiaries could access and benefit from the MPCG support. This meticulous selection and verification process ensured that the assistance reached those most in need, fostering transparency and accountability throughout the distribution process.

The following is the breakdown of Sex, Age Disaggregated for the 632 households who received the MPCG.



Note: 0.76% of the male household members are PWD and 0.95% of female household member are PWD

Post Monitoring Distribution for MPCG

Considering the Grand Bargain guidelines for MPCG, TRCS organized Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) after each tranche. The first PDM was organized in November 2023 and the second PDM done in January 2024. This report

¹⁸ Ministry of Internal Affairs

is focused on findings from PDM implemented in November 2023 and January 2024. The objectives of PDM are (1) to monitor the implementation of first trench MPCA distribution (2) to measure the changes taken place among the vulnerable households affected by the tsunami (3) to gather beneficiaries' feedback on the implementation of first trench MPCA distribution. In addition to the programmatic objectives, the PDM also aims to document learning from the implementation of MPCA distribution and prepare a documentation that is ready for both internal and external sharing. The PDM adopts qualitative approach and combine both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. *Key information for MPCG Post Distribution Monitoring can be found in Annex 1.*

Challenges and Lessons Learned from the Tonga Red Cross Society's Cash Voucher Assistance

1. Early Recovery Multi-Purpose Cash Grant (MPCG):

Challenges:

- **Logistical Constraints:** Conducting nine field trips to Outer Islands and Tongatapu presented logistical and security challenges, especially in reaching remote and severely affected areas due to remote locations of the outer island and limited method of transportation.
- **Assessment of Needs:** Accurately assessing the diverse and immediate needs of 209 households across different rural areas was a complex task.
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensuring equitable and effective allocation of financial resources in a two-phase distribution process required meticulous planning and execution.
- **Transfer Modality:** Due to the emergency phase, the chaos aftermath of the disaster and the lack of the FSP with good coverage, most of the fund transfers were done on cash envelope.

Lessons Learned:

- **Importance of Field Presence:** Direct engagement with affected communities was invaluable for understanding and addressing their needs effectively and to understand the best way and channels to communicate key messages from and to beneficiaries.
- **Flexibility in Aid Distribution:** Adopting a two-phase cash distribution approach for early recovery MPCG, CVA for PWD, and CVA for MPCG Basic Needs allowed for addressing immediate and longer-term recovery and specific needs.
- **Collaboration is Key:** Strong partnerships with other organizations and government were crucial in enhancing the capacity and reach of relief efforts and to minimize the overlapping.
- **The need for an efficient transfer modality:** The exercises carried out during this phase prompted the national society and the IFRC to assess and determine a proper transfer modality while eliminating the risks of using cash on envelope disbursement.

2. Multipurpose Cash Support to People with Disabilities (PWD):

Challenges:

- **Identifying Beneficiaries:** Coordinating with NEMO to identify and reach out to 244 PwD across various islands was challenging due to the diverse needs and locations of these individuals.
- **Targeted Assistance:** Ensuring that the financial aid addressed specific needs of PwD, such as medicine and clothing, required a tailored approach.

Lessons Learned:

- **Inclusivity in Humanitarian Aid:** Focusing on PwD highlighted the importance of inclusivity and tailored support in disaster response.

- **Effective Collaboration:** Working with NEMO demonstrated the effectiveness of inter-agency collaboration in reaching vulnerable populations.
- The 'cash in envelopes' enabled distribution to proceed in a timely manner, but it created risks. It was stated TRCS would not use 'cash in envelopes' again but rather set up an agreed processes with Financial Service Provider.

3. Cash for Work Program:

Challenges:

- **Environmental Restoration:** Addressing the polluted lake's cleanup and restoration was a significant environmental challenge.
- **Decent Work Conditions:** Implementing the program under 'decent work' conditions while accommodating participants' other responsibilities was complex.

Lessons Learned:

- **Community Engagement:** Active participation of local communities in restoration work fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment.
- **Broader Impact:** The pr d to environmental restoration, health risk mitigation, and community well-being.

4. Multipurpose Cash Grant Program:

Challenges:

- **Transfer Value Calculation:** Determining the grant amount based on Tonga's population median income, common monthly expenditures, and additional costs arising from transportation and inflation was intricate, as it had never been practiced before.
- **Lack of collective experience and knowledge** around providing cash assistance after a disaster and coupled with a lack of developed systems, resulted in a slower response.
- **Verification of the Households:** The list was extensive, but the rigorous process had to be done to ensure the eligibility of the households to receive the MPCG. It was challenging for all agencies, NGOs to quickly assess needs, identify beneficiaries, and then be able to access those people. Assessments and identification of beneficiaries took too long. Community recipients were not familiar with receiving cash assistance after a disaster. This lack of community knowledge about the criteria applied, and how funds were being distributed, created some delays, and may have caused some community confusion.
- **Opening of bank account:** 78 per cent of the households had bank accounts with TDB but 22 per cent did not need to open a new account. Verification and identification of the households took time.
- **Effective Disbursement:** Ensuring timely and efficient disbursement of funds to 632 families through the Tonga Development Bank posed operational challenges it also due to limited communication and collaboration between organizations/ partners and Government on CVA approaches, criteria, and distributions as well as some potential beneficiaries had relocated, and some population lists for communities were out of date. Additional challenges also come from some communities' leaders who appeared to be biased about who should receive funds and who shouldn't. Partners appeared reluctant to share criteria and distribution lists, resulting in a lack of transparency / data sharing. This lack of knowledge between partners did not enable coordination across localities to enable equity. This appears to have resulted in some duplication and / or gaps.
- **Finding a cashless method to deliver the CVA** will reduces several risks owned by physical money such as physical damaged or lost and it reduce the need for people to visit the bank/ATM. Due to this rationale, e-wallet or application-based transaction should also be considered as one transfer modality through framework agreement.

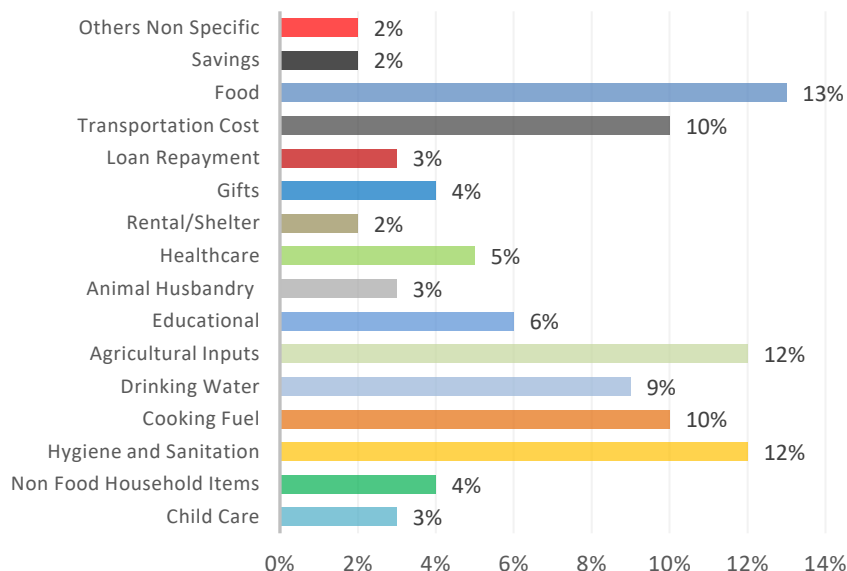
- **Financial Service Provider engagement through FSP:** While Tonga Development Bank is a good partner for delivering the CVA, the service contract modality instead of Framework Agreement will also provide a barrier for future implementation.

Lessons Learned:

- **Strategic Approach:** All actors to contribute to role of Tonga Cash Working Group, with the support of Pacific Regional Cash Working Group and with improvement communication and collaboration with Government, should be able to lead and coordinate CVA applications in future events to further imbed and formalize their role in CVA coordination, to lead interagency market assessment, and feasibility analysis in preparation for future disasters as well as to support local partners to further develop systems/ procedures (MOUs, SOP, Tools, data sharing etc.) designing dissemination campaign and training with pacific context in mind etc.
- **Financial Service Provider:** The collaboration between TRCS and IFRC not only expanded the scope of their initiatives but also brought to light the growing recognition of the significance of cash transfers within the Tongan context. Both organizations actively identified and engaged with a broader range of service providers who understood the crucial role of cash transfers in supporting disaster-affected communities in Tonga. This collective realization marked a pivotal shift in the approach to humanitarian assistance, acknowledging the importance of providing affected individuals and families with the flexibility and autonomy to meet their specific needs in the wake of disasters. Furthermore, this newfound awareness led to a willingness among these service providers to invest in cutting-edge technologies and innovative solutions. These investments were aimed at ensuring that even remote communities residing in the outer islands of Tonga could access the benefits of cash transfer programs efficiently and securely. The commitment to technological advancements demonstrated a forward-thinking approach to humanitarian aid, emphasizing the need to adapt to the evolving needs and preferences of disaster-affected populations. In essence, the TRCS and IFRC's collaborative efforts not only catalyzed a broader adoption of cash transfers but also underscored the importance of leveraging technology to enhance accessibility and inclusivity for the most vulnerable and marginalized communities, especially those living in remote outer islands. This transformative shift in the humanitarian landscape has the potential to bring about more efficient and targeted assistance in future disaster responses in Tonga and beyond.
- **Cash Literacy within Communities –** The implementation of the Multipurpose Cash Grant (MPCG) program played a pivotal role in advancing cash, banking, and technology literacy, particularly within the outer islands of Tonga. This initiative served as a catalyst for a significant paradigm shift in the way banking facilities were perceived and utilized by the local communities. One of the most notable impacts of the MPCG program was its contribution to enhancing financial literacy. The program provided valuable opportunities for individuals and households in the outer islands to gain a deeper understanding of financial concepts and practices. Beneficiaries learned about the basics of banking, including opening and managing bank accounts, understanding financial transactions, and maximizing the benefits of digital banking services. This newfound knowledge empowered them to make informed financial decisions, fostering a sense of financial independence and security. Moreover, the MPCG program effectively introduced technology literacy to these communities. Many beneficiaries, especially those residing in remote areas, had limited exposure to digital technologies and online banking services. The program not only familiarized them with digital banking platforms but also equipped them with the necessary skills to navigate and utilize these technologies confidently. This digital literacy enhancement was instrumental in bridging the technological gap, ensuring that even residents of the outer islands could access and leverage modern banking solutions effectively. In summary, the MPCG program went beyond its immediate financial assistance role by serving as an invaluable educational platform. It not only improved cash, banking, and technology literacy but also initiated a transformative shift in the way local communities interacted with banking facilities, marking a significant step towards financial inclusion and empowerment, especially within the outer islands of Tonga.

- Dignified Assistance:** Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) Survey shows 98% of respondents stated that they were very satisfied with implementation of MPCG for basic needs while 2% shows somewhat satisfied. They spent their assistance for more than 16 different allocations with food (23%), personal hygiene (12%), energy for cooking their food (10%), transportation (10%) and for water (9%) as their top 5 expenses. It is clearly shown the flexibility of CVA where people make their own priority and decide how they best used the assistance to improve their quality of life after the disaster.

Expenditure on the MPCG based on the PDM



The Chart provides more tangible assessment on the feedback from the communities on the selective areas they have spent the funds on.

	Health & Care <i>(Mental Health and psychosocial support / Community Health / Medical Services)</i>	People Reached	8040	Male	Female
				3618	4422
Objective:	<i>Strengthening holistic individual and community health of the population impacted through community level interventions and health system strengthening</i>				
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target		
	<i># households provided with mosquito nets</i>	1,000	89		
	<i># Covid 19 Response PPE Distributed</i>	1450	1450		
	<i># of people tested for Covid-19</i>	245	245		
	<i># of people provided with PSS (Nomuka)</i>	100	100		
	<i># staff trained in First Aid</i>	N/A	12		
	<i># staff trained in PFA/PSS</i>	N/A	21		
	<i># staff and volunteers qualified as First Aid Trainers (TOT)</i>	N/A	15		
Achievement					
Health and Care					

1. **Health and Safety Measures:** TRCS successfully distributed 89 mosquito nets to households, particularly focusing on the high-need areas of Tongatapu and Ha'apai, enhancing the protection against vector-borne diseases post-disaster.
2. **Psychosocial Support (PSS):** A full complement of 100 people in Nomuka were provided with psychosocial support services, addressing the mental and emotional well-being of those affected by the disaster.
3. **Capacity Building:** TRCS has significantly strengthened its organizational capacity by training 12 staff members in First Aid and 21 in Psychological First Aid (PFA)/PSS. Additionally, 15 staff and volunteers have been qualified as First Aid Trainers through a dedicated Training of Trainers (TOT) program.
4. **Community Outreach and Engagement:** In response to COVID-19, TRCS aided the Ministry of Health by translating key messages, distributing educational posters, and marking World Red Cross Day through low-contact media engagements. The World Blood Donor Day activities further exemplified TRCS's commitment to supporting national health initiatives.
5. **COVID-19 Response:** The distribution of 1,450 masks and continuous COVID-19 testing for staff and volunteers, along with the provision of PPE and rapid antigen test kits, showed a proactive approach to managing the pandemic within the organization and the community.
6. **First Aid Program Enhancement:** The First Aid program development mission in collaboration with New Zealand Red Cross and IFRC has laid the groundwork for a robust First Aid training framework, with a particular focus on instructor support and professional development.
7. **Community Resilience:** The training of new First Aid instructors, especially from remote locations, is set to significantly boost TRCS's ability to deliver vital First Aid skills within the community, thereby enhancing resilience and emergency response capabilities.
8. **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS):** Through community events and awareness initiatives, TRCS has been instrumental in providing informal support and raising awareness about MHPSS.

Challenges:

- **COVID-19 Outbreak Management:** The onset of the COVID-19 Omicron variant posed challenges in maintaining safety and continuity of operations. Adapting to this rapid change in health conditions tested the organization's response mechanisms.
- **Disaster-Related Mental Health Issues:** The emotional impact of displacement and loss of livelihoods created a substantial need for psychosocial support, stretching the capacity of available resources and volunteers trained in PFA.

Lessons Learned:

- **Importance of Preparedness:** The experience underscored the critical role of preparedness measures, such as PPE procurement and messaging development, prior to health crises like the Omicron outbreak.
- **Value of Ongoing Engagement:** TRCS's prior engagement with NEMO proved to be an asset in the immediate aftermath of the eruption. Similarly, continuous engagement with health authorities is identified as a vital step for informed and timely responses to infectious disease outbreaks.
- **Community-Centered Approach:** Organizing community events for sharing experiences and providing informal support has been an effective strategy in addressing the broader impacts of disasters on mental health and social cohesion.

The response to the eruption and tsunami, complemented by the ongoing pandemic management, has reinforced the importance of a multi-faceted approach in disaster recovery, integrating health, psychosocial support, and community engagement to build back stronger and more resilient communities.

	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	People Reached	6700	Male	Female
				3000	3700

Objective:	<i>Ensure safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and adequate hygiene awareness of the communities during relief and recovery phases of the Emergency Operation, through community and organizational interventions</i>
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Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	# of litres water distributed	15,000	20,000
	# of households receiving WASH relief items (buckets, jerry cans, hygiene kits) ¹⁹	480	1,500
	# of households received Special Quarantine Purposed Hygiene Kits*	830	N/A ²⁰
	# of people using portable toilets supplied by TRCS	60	60
	# of water tanks (10,000L) and filtration installed in communities	20	20
	# of water filters distributed	166	200
	# of Jerry Cans	166	200

Achievement

Water and Sanitation Intervention

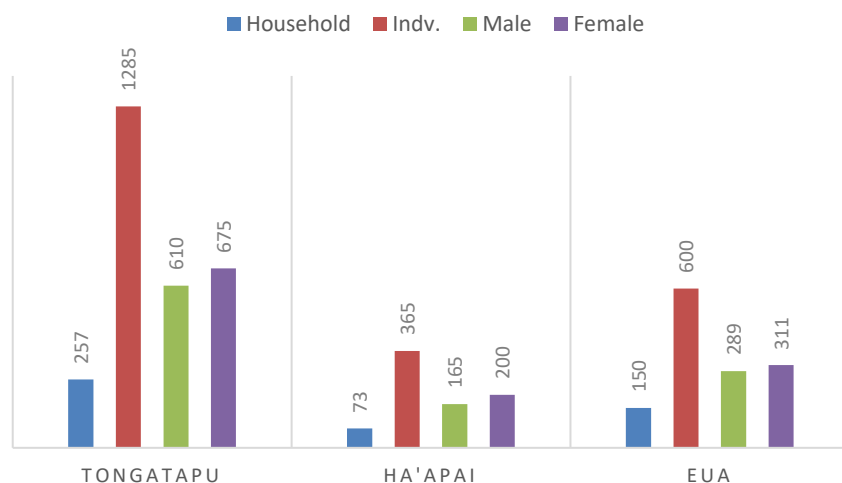
In the wake of the tsunami disaster, the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) played a pivotal role in addressing the critical need for water and sanitation, a priority heightened by the combined impacts of infrastructure damage, ashfall contamination, and seawater inundation. The immediate aftermath of the disaster saw a rapid assessment by TRCS, revealing that water and sanitation access were critically affected, even more so than shelter. This insight guided the subsequent response strategies. During the initial four days post-eruption, up until 19 January, TRCS's swift action in collaboration with the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) led to the distribution of 6,780 liters of water to affected families, benefiting over 10,000 individuals. This effort was crucial, especially considering many households' reliance on rainwater harvesting and borehole water, which were severely disrupted. Additionally, TRCS facilitated the provision of 20 water tanks to evacuation centers in Haafeva, Kotu, and Siesia, significantly bolstering the water supply in these critical areas. TRCS also distributed 480 pieces of hygiene kits (extended) to households from Tongatapu, Ha'apai and 'Eua.

The water contamination issues identified by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in Ha'apai, particularly in Fonoifua, Tungua, and Nomuka underscored the complexity of the situation. Despite the challenges, throughout the response period, TRCS successfully delivered an impressive total of **15,000 liters of water** to the affected communities.

¹⁹ Special Quarantined Hygiene Kit Includes – Dignity Kit, PPE, Masks, Wet Wipes and Disinfectant Spray

²⁰ The distribution of the Special Quarantined Hygiene Kits are not part of the appeal operations

DISTRIBUTION OF HYGIENE KITS



In terms of capacity building, the IFRC WASH surge delegate's training for four TRCS staff and nine volunteers on the installation and maintenance of household water filters marked a significant step forward. This training not only enhanced the technical skills of TRCS personnel but also laid the groundwork for future collaborations with local partners in implementing water filters.

The scope of TRCS's intervention extended beyond water supply. Between 31 March and 15 June, the organization provided 830 special-purpose hygiene kits and 106 blankets

to the Ministry of Health, assisting repatriates in quarantine. These kits, distinct from those covered under the appeal, played a vital role in maintaining hygiene standards in quarantine facilities. Furthermore, TRCS's initiative to hire and place nine portable toilets in the communities of Kanokupolu and Patangata (western Tongatapu)

showcased their commitment to addressing sanitation needs. Serviced by an external provider and operational until 29 April, these facilities benefitted approximately 13 households, or around 60 people, demonstrating a targeted approach to community assistance.



IFRC WASH surge delegate, leading household water filter training.
(Photo: IFRC)

In addition to implementing recovery work on the Outer Islands, the TRCS teams also distributed essential WASH equipment and provided instructional sessions to community groups about using water filters effectively. Households, schools, and church halls that were impacted by the tsunami, received WASH resources (water filters and water containers). These activities provided access to safe water for households and for communal areas, including evacuation centers.

Table 6 - Number of people reached through WASH relief items at Household, Communal Areas, and Evacuation Centres.

Community	Beneficiaries	Water filters distributed	Water containers distributed	Average no. of people
Nomuka	Household	31	31	175
	Churches	7	7	410
	Schools	2	2	171
Fonoifua	Household	12	12	68
	Church	1	1	90
Tungua	Household	16	16	91
Ha'afeva	Household	6	6	34

Hihifo, Hp	Household	11	11	75
	Church	10	10	879
	Schools	10	10	545
Ohonua, 'Eua	Household	40	40	225
	Schools	10	10	2,905
	Church	10	10	1,430
TOTAL		166	166	7,098

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The response faced significant challenges, including difficult access to outer islands, identifying affected individuals at evacuation centers, volunteer availability and TRCS's initial knowledge gap in WASH technical details. However, these challenges provided valuable learning opportunities.

TRCS significantly improved logistics strategies, ensuring more efficient and effective delivery of aid. The training in WASH enhanced the volunteers' technical skills, preparing them for future emergencies. Moreover, TRCS developed a more profound understanding of efficient community engagement, learning to navigate complexities in disaster response scenarios.

These achievements and learnings highlight TRCS's adaptability and commitment to meeting the critical water and sanitation needs in disaster-affected areas, setting a strong foundation for future humanitarian interventions.

	Protection, Gender and Inclusion	People Reached	3100	Male	Female
				1300	1800
Objective:	<i>Communities identify the needs of the most at risk and particularly disadvantaged and marginalized groups, due to inequality, discrimination and other non-respect of their human rights and address their distinct needs</i>				
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target		
	<i># of HH RFL Services</i>	163	N/A		
	<i># Solar Lights Distributed</i>	634	N/A		
Achievement					
With support from ICRC, TRCS commenced RFL services on 20 January 2022. From 15 to 26 January 2022, 163 Tongan households made "safe and well" calls to families overseas using TRCS satellite phones. In addition, inquiries were received from 42 international family members seeking news of Tongan relatives. Following the catastrophic events in Tonga, the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), implemented several crucial initiatives to aid the affected populations. Commencing on 20 January 2022, TRCS initiated Restoring Family Links (RFL) services, enabling 163 households to make "safe and well" calls to relatives overseas. Additionally, 42 international inquiries were received from family members seeking information about their loved ones in Tonga.					

In an effort to bolster their response capabilities, TRCS staff participated in a one-day Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) refresher training on 13 April, attended by ten female and one male staff member. This training focused on the Dignity, Access, Participation and Safety Framework, emphasizing the collection of sex and age-disaggregated data and addressing sexual and gender-based violence in emergencies. A significant outcome of this training was the development of an internal reporting pathway that aligns with survivor-centered principles, enhancing the organization's ability to handle sensitive cases related to child protection and gender-based issues confidentially and effectively.

Recognizing the pivotal role of Tonga's faith-based organizations, TRCS and IFRC have engaged faith leaders in their PGI initiatives. Given their influential position in the community, faith leaders are instrumental in integrating traditional values with modern protection principles, thereby facilitating a culturally sensitive approach to addressing child protection and gender-related concerns. This collaboration not only fosters community acceptance of PGI principles but also leverages the clergy's influence to promote awareness and support for vulnerable populations.

Additionally, TRCS has been diligent in collecting gender-disaggregated data for non-food relief item distributions, ensuring targeted support across different age groups. Both TRCS and IFRC adhere to a zero-tolerance policy for violence against children, with child protection policies being a mandatory component of volunteer orientation. This comprehensive approach ensures that all sectors of TRCS and IFRC operations are geared towards protecting children from exploitation and abuse, emphasizing inclusivity and non-discrimination.

Through these initiatives, TRCS, with IFRC's support, demonstrates the effectiveness of culturally sensitive and inclusive approaches in humanitarian work. By aligning protection, gender, and inclusion principles with Tonga's unique cultural and religious context, they are paving the way for a protective, gender-sensitive, and inclusive society. This approach not only respects the cultural nuances of Tonga but also ensures the sustainability of essential protection and inclusion principles within the community.

Incorporating the PGI elements with CVA

The safety and security of women and children were one of the things identified by some families in the outer islands. 634 solar lights and bolt locks were distributed to households that identified the need for it to improve safety during the early recovery phase.

During the recovery phase especially related to the Household Recovery Program and the MPCG assessments - a greater awareness was carried out within these communities regarding all the services that TRCS provides. This included emergency response and first aid trainings, disaster management, the disability center, referral services and others.

Challenges in Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) Programming for the Tonga Tsunami Operations

The Tonga Tsunami Operations encountered several significant challenges in implementing Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) programming, impacting the effectiveness and reach of disaster response efforts. These challenges were multifaceted, stemming from logistical, communication, and socio-cultural factors.

- **Access to Remote Islands** - The geography of Tonga, consisting of numerous remote islands, posed a substantial barrier to the delivery of aid and PGI services. The difficulty in reaching these isolated communities limited the ability of the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) and its partners to assess and address the specific needs of vulnerable populations, including women, children, and persons with disabilities.
- **Communication Breakdowns** - The immediate aftermath of the volcano eruption saw a significant disruption in communication networks. This breakdown not only hampered the coordination among aid organizations but also affected the dissemination of critical information regarding access to PGI services.

and support. The lack of reliable communication channels made it challenging to gather data on the needs of affected populations and to provide timely updates and information.

- **Trust Issues with TRCS** - A notable challenge was the inherent trust issue among the islanders towards the TRCS. Many local communities exhibited a preference for support from local churches, which are deeply ingrained in the social fabric of Tongan society. This preference impacted the TRCS's ability to effectively implement PGI programming, as engagement and buy-in from the communities are crucial for the success of such initiatives.
- **Initial Coordination Chaos** - The early stages of the operation were marked by chaos and lack of coordination among various stakeholders, including government bodies, international aid organizations, and local groups. This disarray further complicated the implementation of PGI programming, as a coordinated approach is essential for addressing the nuanced needs of different gender and social groups, especially in a disaster context where resources are limited, and the needs are immediate.
- **Insufficient Specialization in PGI within TRCS** - The individual appointed as the focal person for Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) within the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) also assumed multiple other responsibilities, including that of the communication lead. This multifaceted role allocation, combined with a lack of specialized experience in PGI, presented challenges in developing and implementing an effective PGI strategy during the emergency. The situation underscored the need for dedicated PGI expertise to ensure that the approaches adopted are appropriately tailored to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of the affected populations.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including enhancing logistical capabilities to reach remote areas, improving communication infrastructure, building trust with local communities through culturally sensitive engagement strategies, and strengthening coordination mechanisms among all stakeholders involved in disaster response.

Lessons Learned in Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) Programming for the Tonga Tsunami Operations

The Tonga Tsunami Operations provided valuable insights into the implementation of Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) programming in emergency responses. Several strategies and actions taken during the operations highlighted the importance of adaptability, community engagement, and innovative approaches in delivering PGI messages effectively.

- **Leveraging Volunteer Enthusiasm with Support from IFRC** - The eagerness and commitment of volunteers, bolstered by the guidance and support from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) team, were crucial in disseminating key PGI messages across the islands. This underscores the importance of harnessing local volunteer networks and providing them with adequate support and information to act as effective conduits for PGI communication.
- **Innovation through Social Media** - The Tonga Red Cross Society's (TRCS) use of social media as a platform for sending out key PGI messages was an innovative approach that capitalized on the widespread use of digital platforms. This method proved effective in reaching a broader audience, highlighting the potential of digital tools in enhancing the reach and impact of PGI messaging in disaster response efforts.
- **Integration of PGI Messages with Aid Distribution** - The consolidation of PGI messages with the distribution of solar lights is an excellent example of integrating PGI principles into practical aid delivery. This approach not only ensured that aid recipients were provided with essential goods but also received important PGI information, reinforcing the message that protection, gender, and inclusion are integral to all aspects of disaster response. Furthermore, the Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) program, initiated in the second half of 2023, offered a more defined platform for the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) to disseminate information and address Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) programming more effectively. This initiative allowed for direct engagement with beneficiaries through financial support mechanisms, creating opportunities for more personalized communication and feedback. The flexibility of the CVA program facilitated the delivery of tailored

messages that catered to the specific needs and concerns of diverse groups, enhancing the understanding and integration of PGI principles among the affected communities. Additionally, the program's structure provided a conducive environment for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of PGI messaging, allowing for adjustments and improvements in real-time. This approach not only empowered beneficiaries by providing them with choice and control over their recovery needs but also strengthened the TRCS's capacity to implement PGI-focused interventions that are responsive and adaptive to the evolving dynamics of disaster recovery.

- **Timely Training for Volunteers** - The decision to conduct training for volunteers in October, ahead of the main operations, was pivotal in preparing the ground teams with the necessary knowledge and skills for PGI programming. This lesson highlights the importance of timely and targeted training for volunteers, equipping them with the expertise required to address PGI concerns effectively during emergency responses.

These lessons emphasize the value of innovative communication strategies, the integration of PGI messaging into practical aid distribution, and the critical role of volunteer training and support in enhancing the effectiveness of PGI programming during disaster operations. These insights can guide future efforts in improving the delivery and impact of PGI initiatives in emergency contexts.



Community Engagement and Accountability

Objective:

Focused on saving and improving lives through timely and accurate information dissemination, and promoting transparency and accountability by establishing robust community feedback mechanisms.

	Indicator	Actual	Target
Key indicators:	# of people received CEA Support	5000	N/A
	# of feedback messages received	300 ²¹	N/A
	# of feedback on relief distribution	76	N/A
	# of feedback on cash assistance recovery programs – CVA, PWD and Cash for Work	192	N/A
	# staff and volunteers trained on CEA	20 (11 staff and 9 volunteers)	N/A
	# of HH engaged during Household Recovery Phase	118	280
	# of HH engaged during MPCG Phase	632	632

Achievement

The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), in its HTHH operations, has exemplified a paradigm of community engagement and accountability (CEA) that is both responsive and inclusive. The success of TRCS in these areas is a testament to their commitment to not just meet the immediate needs of the affected populations but also to establish a foundation of trust and cooperation that will bolster future disaster response efforts.

²¹ Including the PDM feedback from MPCG

In May 2022, with the support of an IFRC CEA delegate from India, TRCS staff received crucial training in community engagement and accountability. This training laid the groundwork for implementing a robust community feedback mechanism, operationalized through an established telephone line that enabled beneficiaries to make inquiries and voice their concerns about relief and recovery programs.

The distribution of relief items and the execution of recovery programs have been instrumental in forging robust relationships with impacted communities. This is particularly evident in the Outer Islands, where access to goods and services is less readily available. The recovery programs have not only provided immediate assistance but have also emphasized the significance of TRCS's relationship with these communities, a factor that is vital for the successful development and implementation of future programs.

TRCS, with IFRC's backing, undertook a series of beneficiary surveys, obtaining valuable feedback on the assistance provided. This feedback has been instrumental in shaping the approach and delivery of services, ensuring they are aligned with the community's needs and expectations. From feedback on direct relief distributions to specific insights on cash payments to people with disabilities (PWD), every piece of feedback has been a learning opportunity and a step towards improvement.

TRCS has also demonstrated agility in communication, employing a variety of mass media and social media platforms to disseminate updates on recovery work, engage stakeholders, and solicit feedback. Their consistent radio presence and multiple TV interviews have kept the public informed and involved. The TRCS Facebook page, with over 8,600 followers and over 655,000 reactions, stands as a beacon of TRCS's active digital engagement and a crucial channel for community interaction.

Combined Health, PGI/RFL and General Communication Dissemination Activity Outcomes

TRCS staff and volunteer teams carried out the health, ECV, PGI, RFL and general communication dissemination at the same time when delivering the CVA to the outer Islands. The capacity of the teams and the population of the people residing on the islands contributed to how the dissemination activities were carried out.

In Tungua and Ha'afeva, the team conducted the programmes in the community halls, whereas in Nomuka and Fonoifua it was delivered through a door-to-door approach. The teams distributed pamphlets to the community along with carrying out awareness talks.

Table 8 - Integrated recovery support to outer islands

Community	Approach	Activity conducted	Estimated no. of people reached
Fonoifua	Door-to-door	Brochure distribution, house to house: Health Messages, Dengue fever, COVID-19, TRCS (TNG & Eng)	96
Nomuka	Door-to-door	Brochure distribution, house to house: Health Messages, Dengue fever, COVID-19, TRCS (TNG & English)	581
Tungua	Communal gathering	Communication and Dissemination presentation in community hall	18
Ha'afeva	Communal gathering	- Communication and Dissemination presentation - Brochure distribution, house to house	24
	Government Primary School	- Health and sanitation awareness - Brochure distribution, house to house	53
Hihifo, Hp	Communal gathering	Brochure distribution, community hall: Health Messages, Dengue fever, COVID-19, TRCS (TNG & Eng)	75

Ohonua, 'Eua	Communal gathering	Brochure distribution, community hall: Health Messages, Dengue fever, COVID-19, TRCS (In languages TNG & Eng)	225
Total			1,072



TRCS Volunteers communicating with the CVA recipients. (Photo (C) TRCS 2023)

In all of the above communities, a greater awareness was carried out whether door-to-door or in a community hall, regarding all the services that TRCS provides. This included emergency response and first aid trainings, disaster management, the disability centre and other services.

Final Recovery Activities - Household Recovery and MPCG Activities

However, the journey has not been without its challenges. The Household Recovery Program faced hurdles, with beneficiaries unclear about their financial commitments to the government. TRCS responded proactively by collaborating with the Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI) to clarify details for beneficiaries, leading to re-orientation programs to ensure communities understood the processes involved.

In the implementation of the Multipurpose Cash Grant (MPCG), TRCS registered 632 households as recipients and harnessed community townhall sessions for direct engagement. These sessions served as platforms for detailed dissemination of program specifics and for addressing community queries, facilitating a two-way dialogue that has been pivotal for the program's success.

Feedback from these engagements highlighted concerns about fund transfer modalities, eligibility criteria, and the amount to be transferred. TRCS's fieldwork, including local radio announcements, newspaper notices, and especially field travel, played a critical role in ensuring the messages reached the community effectively. The narrative of TRCS's community engagement and accountability during the HTHH operations is one of proactive communication, empathetic response to feedback, and ongoing collaboration with stakeholders. The initiatives taken have not only served immediate needs but have also set a precedent for future operations, underlining the importance of community trust and partnership in disaster risk reduction.

Challenges in Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) for the Tonga Tsunami Operation

The Tonga Tsunami Operation faced several significant challenges in implementing effective Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) strategies. These obstacles stemmed from organizational, operational, and socio-cultural factors, which collectively impacted the effectiveness of the Tonga Red Cross Society's (TRCS) engagement with affected communities.

- **Limited Exposure to CEA Activities** - The TRCS had limited experience with integrating the CEA component into their disaster response efforts. The absence of a dedicated CEA specialist within the organization meant that there was no clear leadership driving the CEA processes. This lack of focused expertise hindered the development and implementation of effective community engagement strategies.

- **Operational Delays Amidst Disaster Chaos** - In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) and certain government agencies quickly assumed leadership roles in the response efforts. During this period, the TRCS faced challenges in rapidly mobilizing and instrumentalizing their strategy, resulting in a delayed engagement in the CEA processes. This gap allowed other entities to establish the initial frameworks for community engagement, leaving the TRCS to play catch-up.
- **Trust and Accessibility Issues** - A significant barrier to effective CEA was the lack of trust in the TRCS among certain segments of the community, compounded by the physical inaccessibility of some areas. Additionally, there was a noticeable lack of awareness about the importance and role of CEA both within the community and the TRCS itself. These factors combined to create a challenging environment for fostering open dialogue and participation.
- **Preference for Church Groups** - A recurring theme in community preferences was the inclination towards various denominations of church groups within Tonga. These religious organizations hold a strong presence and trust within communities, presenting a challenge for the TRCS in establishing itself as a preferred source of support and engagement. The strong bond between the community and church groups suggests a need for the TRCS to explore partnerships or collaborative approaches with these religious institutions to enhance community engagement and accountability.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including building internal capacities for CEA, fostering partnerships with trusted local organizations, and developing targeted strategies to overcome trust barriers and enhance accessibility. The lessons learned from these challenges can guide future operations to ensure more effective and inclusive community engagement and accountability practices.

Lessons Learned from the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Perspective for the Tonga Tsunami Operation

The Tonga Tsunami Operation provided several key insights into the application and effectiveness of Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) practices. These lessons stem from the experiences and strategies employed during the operation, highlighting the critical role of CEA in disaster response and recovery efforts.

- **Importance of External Support for CEA Awareness** - The involvement of the IFRC team in Tonga was instrumental in emphasizing the significance of the CEA component within disaster programming. This partnership facilitated the development of a robust platform for raising awareness among the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) staff and volunteers, as well as within the broader community, about the value of CEA in enhancing program outcomes.
- **CEA as a Tool for Managing Community Expectations** - The TRCS's experience underscored the effectiveness of CEA in managing community expectations. By employing a variety of tools and approaches, including social media, to engage with communities, the TRCS was able to foster a more informed and collaborative relationship with beneficiaries. This approach helped in setting realistic expectations and building trust between the TRCS and the communities it served.
- **Addressing the Gap in Organizational Awareness** - The operation revealed a significant lack of community awareness about the role and capabilities of the TRCS. This challenge presented an opportunity for the TRCS to enhance its visibility and relevance in the eyes of the community. By actively promoting the organization's mission and activities, especially through CEA initiatives, the TRCS could strengthen its position as a key actor in disaster response and recovery in Tonga.

- **Successful Integration of CEA in CVA Programming** - The effective implementation of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) programming, incorporating best practices of community engagement, showcased the potential of CEA in facilitating successful program delivery. This integration demonstrated how CEA can enhance transparency, accountability and community satisfaction in program outcomes, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness of disaster response efforts.

These lessons highlight the critical importance of CEA in building effective, responsive, and accountable disaster response programs. By leveraging external support, employing diverse engagement tools, addressing organizational awareness gaps, and integrating CEA into program delivery, organizations can improve their impact and foster stronger, more resilient communities.

	Migration	People Reached100	Male	Female
			40	60
Objective:	Communities support the needs of migrants and their families and those assisting migrants at all stages of migration (origin, transit and destination)			
Key indicators:	Indicator		Actual	Target
	# of Internally Displaced HH supported		10	10

Achievement

In the aftermath of the disaster, 10 families from the Mango-Atata Island Cluster made the proactive decision to voluntarily relocate to Tongatapu. Understanding the urgency of their situation, the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) was swift to provide support, offering family tents as a temporary shelter solution for these displaced households. These families were part of the MPCG grant but in principle they are still waiting for the confirmation from the government's decision on receiving the Household Recovery Support.

Recognizing the need for more comprehensive assistance, TRCS also extended a 595 CHF multipurpose cash grant to each of these families. This grant was meticulously calculated to facilitate their recovery process, allowing them the flexibility to allocate funds towards essential needs as they began to rebuild their lives on Tongatapu.

The commitment of TRCS to the welfare of these families goes beyond immediate relief; there is an ongoing advocacy effort with the Ministry of Infrastructure to have these families included in the Household Recovery Program. Despite the Ministry's initial assessments that did not recognize the necessity for inclusion due to a lack of physical damage to their homes, TRCS is championing the cause of these families.

Conversations with the community members have revealed a deep-seated concern for their safety on the islands, a sentiment not reflected in the government's official assessment. The families' decision to move was driven by their conviction that their original locations were no longer safe, indicating a discrepancy between the community's perceptions and the formal evaluations.

This situation highlights the critical role of TRCS in not only providing immediate disaster relief but also in advocating for the voices of vulnerable populations to be heard, ensuring that safety and security are not just determined by visible damage but also by the lived experiences and concerns of the community members themselves.



Risk Reduction, climate adaptation and Recovery

Objective:

To enhance community resilience and reduce the impact of natural disasters in Tonga by implementing a comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategy based on the PER.

Key indicators:

Indicator	Actual	Target
# of construction of evacuation center	0	2
# PER results reviewed	1	1
# of CBDRR activities	Planned 2024	1
# of logistics mapping done	1	1
# of Pro Forma Developed	1	1
# of Tabletop Exercise Executed	1	1
# of Volunteers trained in Emergency Response	10	10
# of Pre-Disaster Meeting	1	1

Achievement

Disaster Risk Reduction

The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), with the unwavering support of the New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC), has made significant strides in advancing disaster risk reduction initiatives in the Ha'apai Group Islands. Despite initial plans to construct two evacuation centers and subsequent budgetary constraints, TRCS has successfully navigated these challenges to focus on the construction of a single, vital evacuation center on Ha'afeva Island. This pivot was made possible through the decisive action and financial coverage from NZRC, which agreed to a bilateral partnership to fund the construction. The tender process adhered strictly to IFRC procurement policies, culminating in the awarding of the contract to a local company. The contract was set to be signed in January 2024, with an IFRC Construction Delegate appointed to oversee the construction process in Tonga. This development marks a cornerstone in enhancing the community's capacity to respond to emergencies, with planned Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) activities set to follow the center's completion.

In 2023, a thorough Prepared for Effective Response (PER) review was conducted, reinforcing the robustness of TRCS's emergency management capabilities. Updating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) was a key outcome of the TRCS Emergency Management training in October 2024, facilitated by IFRC support. A targeted table-top exercise was also conducted, focusing on cyclone-based response readiness.

Logistical preparedness received a boost with comprehensive mapping, updates to prepositioning lists, and stock takes in the outer islands. Essential hygiene kit components were replenished, ensuring the readiness of 2000 units. TRCS further invested in its human capital; logistics and warehouse training were imparted to 10 volunteers, and shelter kit training was delivered to another cohort of 10 volunteers by the Construction delegate.



Pre-disaster meeting in October – (Picture: TRCS 2023)

Meeting in October 2023. This pivotal gathering brought together key stakeholders including the Tonga Government, the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO), local NGOs, and the Tonga Meteorological Services.

The agenda for this strategic meeting centered on enhancing preparedness for the cyclone season and developing robust response plans for potential El Niño events. This collaborative effort underscores TRCS's dedication to a holistic and cooperative approach in bolstering the nation's resilience to natural disasters. The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) took a significant step in clarifying its role and operational strategies in disaster management.

They presented their comprehensive Emergency Response Framework, which detailed their logistics mapping, volunteer database management, utilization of IFRC emergency tools, and the invaluable insights gained from the HTHH operations. This presentation aimed to demystify the functions of TRCS and highlight its auxiliary role to the government in emergency response scenarios.

This collaborative effort underscores TRCS's dedication to a holistic and cooperative approach in bolstering the nation's resilience to natural disasters. The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) took a significant step in clarifying its role and operational strategies in disaster management. They presented their comprehensive Emergency Response Framework, which detailed their logistics mapping, volunteer database management, utilization of IFRC emergency tools, and the invaluable insights gained from the HTHH operations. This presentation aimed to demystify the functions of TRCS and highlight its auxiliary role to the government in emergency response scenarios.

The Tonga Meteorological Services contributed to the meeting by offering a weather outlook for the upcoming six months, which included detailed cyclone forecasts. This information is critical for the planning and preparedness phases of disaster management. A key outcome of this meeting was the reinforcement of TRCS's partnership with the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) and other local NGOs, ensuring a unified front in disaster response. Additionally, the meeting facilitated a two-way dialogue and fostered mutual understanding with the Town Officers representing the outer islands. These officers are instrumental in orchestrating communication and coordinating emergency responses between NEMO, TRCS, and the island communities. This engagement underscores the importance of cohesive collaboration among all stakeholders and the central role of effective communication in disaster preparedness and response. Establishing clear lines of communication and understanding with Town Officers is a crucial step in ensuring timely and effective delivery of services during emergencies.

The DRM manager's participation in the ENAP training in Jakarta in 2023 and the subsequent localized ENAP training in Tonga underscored TRCS's commitment to continuous professional development in emergency management.

Moreover, the development of a Pro Forma Emergency Plan of Action (EPOA) for cyclone scenarios by the Operations Manager for Tonga, now under review by the DRM team in Suva, demonstrates proactive planning and preparedness.

Continuing from the efforts outlined above, TRCS further solidified its disaster preparedness framework by orchestrating a Pre-Disaster

In the sphere of financial preparedness, TRCS has showcased its adaptability and learning ethos through on-the-job training during the Cash Voucher Assistance (CVA) implementation from June to October 2023 and participation in regional cash training in November 2023. This has positioned TRCS not just as cash-ready for its own operations, but also as a capable support structure for other Pacific National Societies. The establishment of a Regional Red Cross Cash Preparedness Network, with the expertise of the CVA Advisor from Fiji and the CVA Coordinator from APRO, is a testament to TRCS's collaborative approach and its commitment to strengthening regional disaster response mechanisms.

The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), while playing a crucial role in disaster response and recovery within its jurisdiction, faces several challenges in the realms of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Climate Adaptation, and Recovery. These challenges, alongside the lessons learned, provide critical insights into the areas requiring strategic focus, capacity enhancement, and the integration of climate and DRR strategies into the broader organizational agenda.

Challenges

- **Limited Visibility and Resource Allocation:** One of the primary challenges for TRCS is its relatively small size and the inconsistency in being recognized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Pacific Partner National Societies (PNS). This recognition is crucial for securing continuous investment in resources, including thematic areas essential for national society development.
- **Narrow DRR Strategy Focus:** TRCS's strategy in DRR is notably minimal, with a predominant focus on First Aid Programs and the OTA school, rather than a comprehensive approach to DRR. This focus limits their ability to effectively respond to and manage the broader spectrum of risks associated with natural disasters and climate change.
- **Sparse Participation in DRM Networks:** The infrequent participation of TRCS staff in Pacific Disaster Risk Management (DRM) networks restricts their opportunity to learn from, share with, and contribute to regional DRR efforts and innovations.
- **Absence of a Climate Agenda:** TRCS lacks a coherent climate agenda or strategy, which is becoming increasingly critical in the face of global climate change. The development of a substantial annual plan that integrates DRR, climate adaptation, and other strategic priorities of the IFRC is necessary for a holistic approach to disaster and climate risk management.
- **Resource Constraints in PER Implementation:** While the Prepared for Effective Response (PER) agenda was ambitious within the Appeal Operation Strategy, the timing and resources allocated were insufficient for implementation within the appeal's timeframe, highlighting a gap in planning and resource mobilization. The PER agenda will be continued as part of the regular country programming under the Unified Plan 2024.

Lessons Learned

- **Strategic Alignment with IFRC Priorities:** Key lesson for TRCS is the importance of understanding and aligning with the IFRC's Strategic Priorities and their enablers. This alignment is crucial for ensuring that TRCS's efforts are supported by and contribute to the broader goals of the IFRC.
- **Inclusion of Local Knowledge:** Efforts to integrate local knowledge into the Pro Forma Emergency Plan of Action (EPOA) for DREF, specifically for cyclone management, have proven valuable. This approach underscores the importance of leveraging local expertise and practices in disaster management strategies.

- **Logistics Strategy Development:** The contribution of the IFRC logistics delegate in developing logistics strategies, including the introduction of the Stockholm Stock Preparedness, illustrates the benefits of specialized input in enhancing operational readiness and response capabilities.
- **Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses:** Disaster preparedness training has been instrumental in identifying the strengths and weaknesses within IFRC's response mechanisms. These findings are integral to refining response plans and improving overall disaster response efficacy.
- **Coordination Mechanism Established** – The outcomes of the Pre-Disaster Meeting and the Table Top Exercise established a much more clearer alignment of roles and responsibilities of Tonga Red Cross with other government agencies including NDMO (NEMO). From the lessons learned of the initial HTHH operations and the recovery activities for the last two years, the profile and the mandates of the TRCS has been informed to the stakeholders. Now the stakeholders and the government agencies understand how the Red Cross movement works and what are the tools available, the partners such as NZRC and ARCS and the response tools and contingency plans within TRCS. It has a deeper understanding which allows the stakeholders especially the government agencies to work closely with TRCS for the future.

Moving Forward

Critically and objectively, the challenges and lessons learned highlight the necessity for TRCS to expand its focus beyond immediate response activities to encompass a more integrated approach to DRR and climate adaptation. This includes enhancing visibility within the IFRC and Pacific networks, securing necessary resources for comprehensive CBDRR programs, developing a clear climate agenda, and ensuring the inclusion of climate and DRR strategies in annual planning processes. Additionally, leveraging local knowledge, enhancing logistics strategies, and aligning with IFRC's strategic priorities are essential steps towards building a resilient and responsive national society capable of addressing the complexities of disaster risk management and climate adaptation in Tonga.

Enabling approaches



National Society Strengthening

Objective:

To bolster operational capacity and deepen understanding of IFRC processes, this objective aims to underscore the criticality of disaster preparedness. It focuses on equipping teams with the necessary skills and insights to effectively manage emergencies, ensuring a swift, coordinated response that minimizes impact and enhances resilience.

Key indicators:

Indicator	Actual	Target
# of Finance Training for TRCS Finance Team	1	1
# OF Regional Cash Preparedness Training	1	1
# of National Society's branches that are well functioning (in the operation)	0	2

# OCAC done with TRCS	0	1
# of Boats and Equipment Provided to TRCS	1	1
# of Trucks Provided to TRCS	1	1
# of Volunteers insured	100	100
# of NHQ Built	0	1
# of Learning Event	1	1

Achievement

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in collaboration with the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), has made significant strides in enhancing disaster preparedness and response capabilities in Tonga, particularly through the HTHH Appeal. This initiative reflects the concerted efforts of TRCS, its partner National Societies, and the IFRC Secretariat to bolster Tonga's resilience and crisis response.

Capacity Building and Training Initiatives:

1. **Finance Training:** In June 2023, TRCS finance staff received specialized training to align with IFRC processes and enhance their financial management skills. This collaboration involved the CCD Finance and the Australian Red Cross finance teams, focusing on strengthening internal financial operations.
2. **Regional Cash Preparedness Training:** A pivotal training session was conducted in November 2023 for TRCS personnel and five other National Societies from the Pacific region. The training aimed to elevate the expertise in Cash Voucher Assistance (CVA) programs, culminating in the formation of the Red Cross Pacific Cash Working Group. This not only fortified TRCS's capabilities but also positioned their personnel to provide surge support in CVA to other Pacific countries in need.



Attendees at the HTHH Learning Event. (Picture: TRCS)

3. **HTHH Learning Event:** TRCS invited key partners to a combined Learning Event for the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai Volcano and Tsunami response and recovery at Nukualofa on 29 November and 30 November 2023. The primary objective of this learning event was to facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building among relevant stakeholders engaged in the response to the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai (HTHH) Volcano and Tsunami. The event also focused on enhancing participants' understanding of the overall tsunami response and recovery in Tonga, with specific emphasis on the use of cash as a modality for assistance. Additionally, the event identified strategies for advancing cash-based assistance (CVA) operations in Tonga and building regional CVA

preparedness. National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai Recovery Project (Ministry of Infrastructure), Ministry of Internal Affairs, Civil Society, Tonga National Council of Churches, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Ministry of Health, International Organization for Movement (IOM), Tonga Development Bank, Live and Learn, Macquarie University, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Seventh Day Adventist Church (ADRA), New Zealand Red Cross Society, Vanuatu Red Cross Society, Tonga Red Cross Society and IFRC - CCD Suva.

Resource Provision and Infrastructure Development:

1. **Boats and Equipment:** To ensure efficient delivery of relief materials and evacuation operations across islands, TRCS was equipped with a boat and a 60HP engine. This resource is crucial for connecting islands and facilitating swift emergency responses.
2. **Vehicle Support:** TRCS received a 3-tonne truck, significantly enhancing their capacity for transporting relief materials within the main island.
3. **National Headquarters (NHQ):** The construction of a new NHQ for TRCS remains a priority. With an allocation of CHF 500,000 from the IFRC appeal, the project is in its planning stage, focusing on resource mobilization and construction planning.

Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) Approach:

The PER approach plays a central role in ensuring that TRCS is well-prepared to tackle various emergencies, with a particular focus on cyclone preparedness and response. This involves activating early warning systems, collaborating with meteorological departments and spearheading community awareness campaigns. The assessment and pre-positioning of emergency relief materials are integral components of this framework.

The key findings from the PER review are as per below: -

- **Comprehensive Contingency Planning for Cyclone and Earthquakes**

The first key finding emphasizes the imperative need for a comprehensive contingency plan specifically tailored to address the unique challenges posed by cyclones and earthquakes. Such a plan should not only outline the immediate response measures but also detail the long-term recovery strategies to ensure communities can quickly return to normalcy. This involves assessing potential risks, identifying vulnerable populations, and establishing clear protocols for evacuation, shelter, and aid distribution.

- **Training of TRCS Personnel**

Another crucial aspect identified is the need for continuous and extensive training of TRCS personnel in various areas critical to disaster management. This includes disaster preparedness, community engagement, logistics, partnership building, and fundraising. Enhancing the skills and knowledge of TRCS staff and volunteers ensures that the organization can lead effective responses and engage with communities and partners more efficiently. Training in these areas enables personnel to better understand the complexities of disaster response and recovery, fostering a proactive rather than reactive approach.

- **Long-term Logistics Distribution Strategy**

The importance of a long-term logistics distribution strategy, particularly for inter-island operations, was also highlighted. Given Tonga's geographical configuration, ensuring aid reaches all affected areas promptly requires meticulous planning and execution. This strategy should account for the logistical challenges posed by the country's island setup, including transportation, communication, and coordination among islands, to guarantee that no community is left behind in the aftermath of a disaster.

- **Prepositioning Strategy**

A significant finding pertains to the need for an effective prepositioning strategy, a concern that extends beyond Tonga to the wider Pacific region. Prepositioning supplies in strategic locations can drastically reduce response times and ensure that aid is immediately available when and where it is needed most. This strategy requires a detailed understanding of the logistics involved in storing and moving supplies and a thorough risk assessment to determine the most effective locations for prepositioning.

- **TRCS's Role as an Auxiliary to the Government**

Lastly, the findings indicate a lack of awareness within the government regarding TRCS's role as an auxiliary to the government in disaster response. This role is pivotal as it defines the scope of TRCS's involvement and responsibilities in national disaster management efforts. A clear understanding and acknowledgment of this role can enhance coordination and collaboration between TRCS and government agencies, leading to more cohesive and effective disaster response and recovery operations.

Challenges and Lessons Learned: Enhancing Operational Capacity and Sustainability

The Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) has faced several challenges that underscore the need for ongoing support and development to enhance its operational capacity and resilience. These challenges, along with the lessons learned, highlight the importance of strategic planning, support, and adaptation to the unique needs of smaller National Societies.

Challenges

- **Need for Continuous CCD Support** - TRCS's journey towards establishing robust operational processes is ongoing, requiring sustained assistance from the CCD to achieve operational excellence. The question stands – where TRCS stands in CCD's priority.
- **High Staff Turnover Rate** - A significant challenge for TRCS is the high rate of staff turnover. This not only affects continuity but also impacts the momentum of ongoing projects and the accumulation of institutional knowledge.
- **Urgent Infrastructure Needs** - The pressing requirement for a new National Headquarters (NHQ) and the associated relocation of the team represent critical logistical and operational challenges that need immediate attention.
- **Attraction and Retention of Local Talent** - The issue of high staff turnover highlights the necessity for TRCS to develop strategies that make working for the Red Cross more appealing to Tongans. Creating a compelling value proposition for potential employees is essential for fostering long-term commitment and enthusiasm.
- **Vacant Key Positions** - The absence of crucial roles such as Volunteer Coordinator and Health Coordinator significantly impacts TRCS's operational effectiveness and its strategic objectives. Filling these positions is imperative to strengthening the organization's capacity to respond to emergencies and to manage ongoing health and volunteer engagement programs effectively.

Lessons Learned

- **Tailored Approaches for Small National Societies** - The experiences from the HTHH operations have underscored the necessity for approaches and frameworks specifically designed for smaller National Societies. These tailored strategies should consider the unique challenges and capacities of organizations like TRCS.
- **Instrumental Support from APRO and CCD** - The support from the Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) and CCD has been crucial in navigating the challenges faced by TRCS. However, there is a recognized need for the continuous development and refinement of processes that are better suited to the context of TRCS.
- **Importance of an Evaluation Exercise** A targeted evaluation focusing on specific operational aspects, successes, and challenges is planned. This evaluation will use case studies, meetings and workshops tailored to the unique needs of small island National Societies in emergency contexts to ensure its utility for the TRCS and Pacific National Societies. By adopting a focused approach, the post-mortem analysis

aims to generate discussion, provide insights and develop actionable recommendations. These outcomes are designed to identify strategies and areas for improvement, ensuring that future operations are more resilient and responsive to the needs of the communities served.

These challenges and lessons learned provide valuable insights into the operational and strategic development needs of the Tonga Red Cross Society. Addressing these issues through targeted support, strategic hiring, and tailored operational frameworks will be crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of TRCS's efforts in disaster preparedness and response.

Conclusion:

The collaboration between TRCS and IFRC under the HTHH Appeal showcases a model of resilience-building and preparedness that is not only reactive but also proactive in addressing the multifaceted challenges of disaster management. Through targeted training, resource provision, and infrastructure development, the partnership is forging a path towards a more resilient and responsive Tonga, capable of facing future emergencies with increased confidence and capability.



Coordination and Partnerships

Objective:	<i>Enhance Tonga Tsunami response through strategic coordination and partnership, ensuring sustainable support to TRCS within our global network of 191 member societies.</i>		
Key indicators:	Indicator	Actual	Target
	<i>Movement wide coordination is described and active</i>	Yes	Yes

Achievement

IFRC and TRCS continue to engage and coordinate with government authorities, and INGOs with a presence in Tonga, and participate in the Pacific Cash Network. TRCS has received remote support from the New Zealand Red Cross (e.g. ICT, funding) and Australian Red Cross (ARC). More information on in kind and funding received can be found on the Financial Report attached. However, other than through IFRC with support from NZRC and ARC, no PNS have been working in Tonga since the eruption.

The New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC) has embarked on a profound partnership with the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), highlighting a commitment to enhancing disaster resilience in Tonga, particularly in the outer islands. These regions, frequently afflicted by cyclones and tsunamis, have underscored the critical necessity for durable disaster management solutions. In response, NZRC has pledged comprehensive funding for the construction of an Evacuation Centre, designed to serve as a safe haven for communities during emergencies. This initiative not only demonstrates NZRC's dedication to supporting vulnerable populations but also signifies a major step forward in building resilient infrastructures capable of withstanding natural disasters.

Further amplifying their support, NZRC has undertaken to cover the full salary of an IFRC Construction Delegate, ensuring expert oversight and execution of the construction project. This move is indicative of NZRC's holistic approach to partnership, where financial support is complemented by technical and professional assistance to maximize project success.

The collaboration between NZRC and TRCS extends beyond infrastructure projects, manifesting in direct support for the communities through two pivotal programs. Firstly, through the Household Recovery Program, NZRC has

chosen to assist communities receiving container homes with the 5 per cent requirement set by the Government. Secondly, the provision of a multipurpose cash grant (MPCG) to 150 households represents a flexible approach to aid, empowering recipients by allowing them to address their most pressing needs in the aftermath of a disaster.

Similarly, the Australian Red Cross (ARC) has played a crucial role in bolstering the resilience and recovery efforts of the TRCS. By contributing significantly to the IFRC-TRCS Household Recovery Program, ARC has facilitated the provision of essential support to households impacted by disasters. Beyond material assistance, ARC has also invested in the capacity building of the TRCS finance department. This strategic support aims to enhance the financial management capabilities of TRCS, ensuring sustainability and efficiency in resource allocation and project implementation.

These partnerships underscore a collaborative effort towards strengthening disaster preparedness and response in Tonga. By focusing on both immediate relief through recovery programs and long-term resilience through capacity building and infrastructure development, NZRC and ARC have demonstrated a comprehensive approach to support. Such initiatives are vital in equipping the TRCS and the communities it serves with the tools and resources necessary to navigate the challenges posed by natural disasters, ultimately leading to more resilient and self-reliant communities.

Challenges and Lessons

A significant challenge encountered within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is the understanding and acknowledgment of the complexities and limited capacities that smaller national societies face when compared to the broader machinery of the Movement. The disparity in values, opinions, and operational capacities between small national societies and the larger organization underscores a critical need for alignment. However, this alignment should not be a one-size-fits-all approach but rather one that is adaptable and sensitive to the unique contexts of these smaller entities.

The response to the disaster in Tonga highlighted this challenge but also paved the way for constructive opportunities. It served as a catalyst for the CCD and regional partners to deepen their focus on the specific needs and capacities of the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS). This situation underscored the necessity for a *more tailored approach in supporting small national societies, especially those situated in the Pacific Islands, which often face unique vulnerabilities due to their geographical and socio-economic contexts.*

One of the key lessons learned from this experience is the importance of fostering a more flexible and understanding partnership framework. Such a framework should prioritize open communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to adapt protocols and support mechanisms to better suit the needs of smaller national societies. Recognizing the value of local knowledge and the capabilities of these societies can enhance the effectiveness of disaster response and risk reduction initiatives.

Moreover, the Tonga response has illuminated the potential for revising overall protocols to better accommodate the realities of small Pacific Island national societies. This includes developing more nuanced strategies that acknowledge their specific challenges, such as limited resources, isolation, and heightened vulnerability to climate-related disasters. By adopting a more context-sensitive approach, the Movement can strengthen its partnerships with small national societies, thereby enhancing their capacity to respond to disasters and reduce risks within their communities.

In essence, the challenges faced in coordination and partnership during the Tonga response have provided invaluable insights into how the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement can evolve its support structure. By learning from these experiences, the Movement can work towards a more inclusive and effective model of collaboration that elevates the capabilities of all its members, particularly those that operate on the front lines of some of the world's most vulnerable regions.



Secretariat Services

Objective:

To strengthen the capacity and resilience of the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) by providing comprehensive support encompassing financial assistance, technical expertise, and human resources. This objective aims to enhance TRCS's ability to deliver effective disaster response and community services, ensuring sustainable development and improved readiness for future challenges

Key indicators:

Indicator

Actual

Target

of evaluation conducted for the operations

1

2

of IFRC Personnel Deployed

5

5

of PNS Personnel Deployed

2

2

Achievement

IFRC CCD in Suva, which supports Pacific National Societies, provides remote support for the HTHH response, including planning, donor engagement, logistics, communications, PMER, finance, shelter and cluster participation. A total of six surge members have been deployed to support the operation. The IFRC CCD Preparedness and Response Manager was deployed from the IFRC CCD Suva to Tonga to support the operation. An IFRC Appeal Manager was also appointed who worked remotely. Surge delegates were deployed to support these areas: communications, WASH functions and CCD CVA Advisor for two and four months respectively. Support was also provided for CEA activities. Furthermore, an IFRC Operations Manager was appointed and deployed to Tonga in mid-September 2022. Since then, other roles have been deployed including the Tonga Appeal Senior Finance Officer and CCD Logistics Manager. The New Zealand Red Cross also deployed a short-term delegate to assist with developing the Household Recovery and Cash Assistance programme. In addition, Australian RC also deployed a logistics delegate in Tonga to support logistics & procurement activities for 2 months (Feb-Apr 2023).

Transitioning towards the recovery of the Tonga Emergency Operations started with the deployment of a full-time Operations Manager to Tonga in March 2023. This deployment marked the initiation of the HTHH operations, setting in motion a series of planned recovery activities integral to the operation strategy. Cash Voucher Assistance (CVA) specialist (Operations Manager based in Manila) was deployed in May 2023 to facilitate the Household Recovery Program. In August 2023, a CVA Coordinator from APRO joined to enhance the Multi-Purpose Cash Grant program. Their expertise significantly contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs.

The shelter component saw significant progress with CCD's Shelter Delegate conducting initial site surveys for the evacuation center. APRO's Regional Shelter Coordinator arrived in May 2023 to finalize critical aspects like the Bill of Quantity and architectural plans. The construction phase was bolstered by hiring a Logistics Delegate and a Construction Delegate, the latter being fully funded by the NZRC. Their collaboration was pivotal in launching the construction tender, ensuring a smooth progression towards the project's completion, expected by June 2024.

The midterm [review](#) conducted in July 2023, with its report submitted in October 2023 highlighted some key insights. Despite the clash in timing with recovery activities, which led to certain recommendations coinciding with ongoing planning, the evaluators noted that these activities would eventually be completed.

Challenges and Lessons Learned:

- **Capacity Constraints of TRCS** - A major challenge identified was the limited capacity of TRCS, a small organization with minimal staff experienced in managing large-scale operations. This highlighted the need for more structured guidance and support.
- **High Turnaround of Delegates** - The operation faced challenges due to the high turnover of IFRC delegates and partners. This frequent change resulted in a lack of consistent and continuous implementation of operations, indicating a need for a more stable and prolonged commitment from international delegates.

In conclusion, while the Tonga Emergency Operations faced various challenges, the concerted efforts of all parties involved, including significant contributions from NZRC and IFRC, demonstrated a strong commitment to disaster recovery and resilience building in Tonga. The experiences and learnings from this operation provide valuable insights for future humanitarian endeavors, emphasizing the importance of consistent support, capacity building, and strategic planning in emergency response and recovery operations.

The final evaluation is set to take place sometime in the second half of 2024. The approach will be different than a traditional evaluation to ensure the utility of the exercise for the TRCS and Pacific National Societies. The HTHH Tonga Operations evaluation will review the emergency response process for small island National Societies, including its effect on the appeal operations and the capacity of the Tonga Red Cross (TRCS) as the responding National Society through a consultative process.

To support the primary purpose, a series of comprehensive case studies will be created on the experiences of the TRCS, focusing on small national societies and their interaction with the IFRC secretariat in the context of catastrophic events. A series of Pacific meetings and workshops will then serve to engage regional stakeholders in collaborative learning exchange to strengthen humanitarian efforts in the region.

The two-part process will facilitate a balanced examination of the responses, highlighting challenges, successful strategies and innovations implemented. This holistic approach is intended to extract meaningful lessons from the entire experience, contributing significantly to future preparedness and response strategies.

D. FINANCIAL REPORT

The initial Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocation was CHF 430,666, while a total of CHF 4 million was requested to support the operation for Secretariat Wide funding. The operation has received generous support from partners, totaling CHF 4,092,668, and the appeal is 102 per cent coverage with 70 per cent expenditures recorded. Regarding the financial management of the appeal, there is a remaining balance of CHF 1,230,151, which is planned to be transferred to the Tonga Unified Plan budget, pending agreement from the donors.

The remaining funds will be allocated to the Tonga Unified Plan to support the implementation of activities. A portion of these funds will also be used for the final evaluation, as outlined in the Secretariat Services section of this report.

The financial report, detailing expenditures, is [attached](#) at the end of this document.

Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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For IFRC Resource Mobilization and Pledges support:

- Rachna Narang, Strategic Engagement and Partnership in Emergencies; email: PartnershipsEA.AP@ifrc.org

For In-Kind donations and Mobilization table support:

- Nuraiza Khairuddin, Manager, Regional Logistics; email: nuraiza.khairuddin@ifrc.org

For Performance and Accountability support (planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting enquiries)

- Mursidi Unir, PMER in Emergencies Coordinator; email: mursidi.unir@ifrc.org

Reference documents



Click here for:

- Previous Appeals and [updates](#)
- [Emergency Appeal Revised](#)

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief, the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable, to **Principles of Humanitarian Action** and **IFRC policies and procedures**. 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.

Annex 1 – Post Distribution Monitoring for Cash and Voucher Assistance

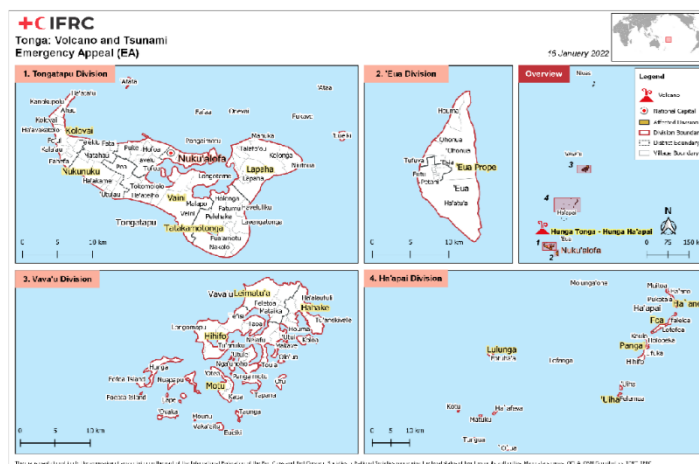


The Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai Volcano Eruption and Tsunami, Tonga, Pacific, 2022 Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) - CVA MPCG Key Findings

Background

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

The eruption of the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai (HTHH) volcano on Saturday, 15 January 2022 resulted ash cloud reaching 15 km and covering an area of 5 km. It was followed by a tsunami with waves reaching up to 15 metres in some parts of Tonga. The Tonga National Emergency Response Office (NEMO) estimated the population affected by the volcanic eruption and ashfall to be 84,776 people (84 per cent of the population of Tongatapu, Ha'apai and 'Eua. The most affected areas were the western and central areas of Tongatapu 4 (Kanakupolu, Kolomatu'a, Tukutonga and Siesia), the Ha'apai island group and parts of the west coast of 'Eua. The underwater volcano eruption is believed to be the largest volcanic event in the past 30 years.



632
households
reached with CVA
MPCG distribution



55%
MPCG CVA recipients
are women.



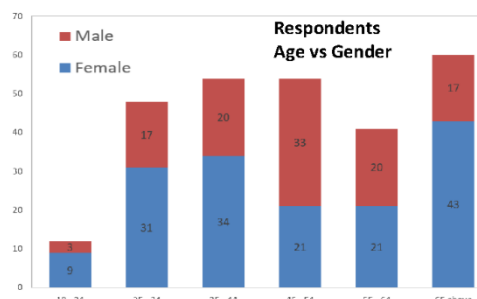
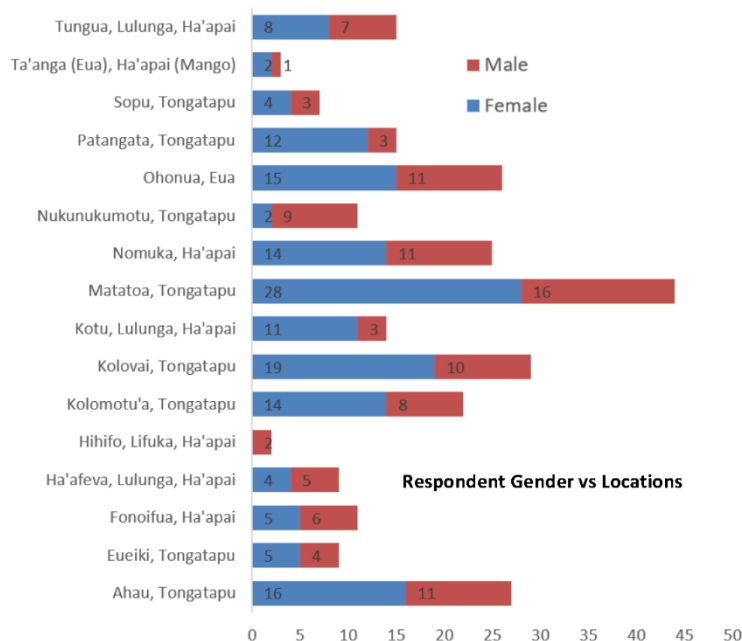
271
households
interviewed
for PDM



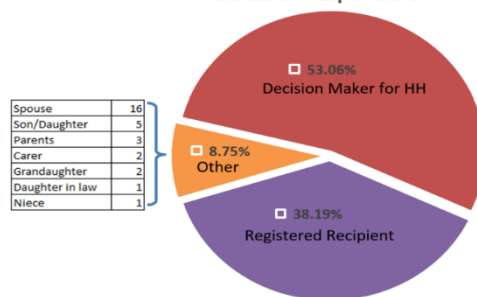
49%
MPCG CVA PDM
respondents
are represented by women



29%
respondents are
from
Tonga outer island

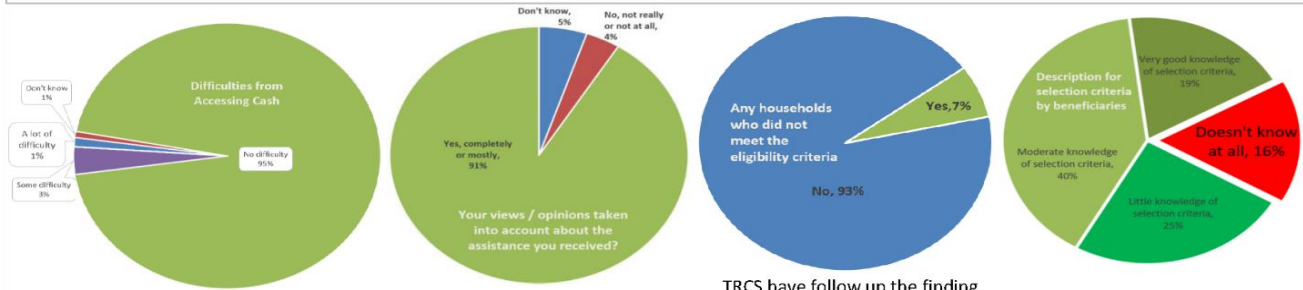


Status of Respondent

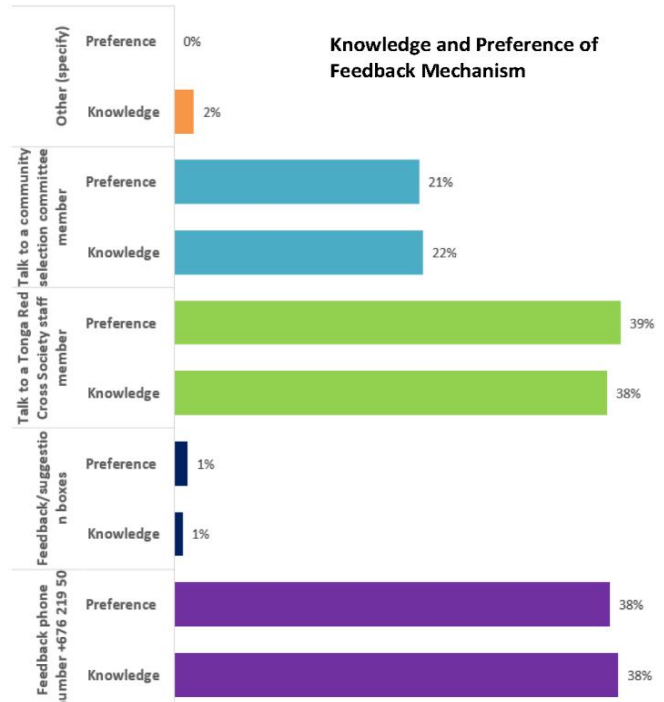
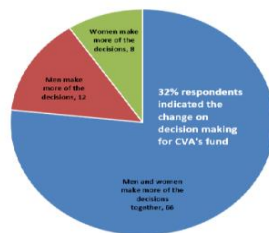
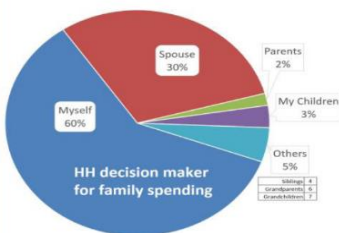
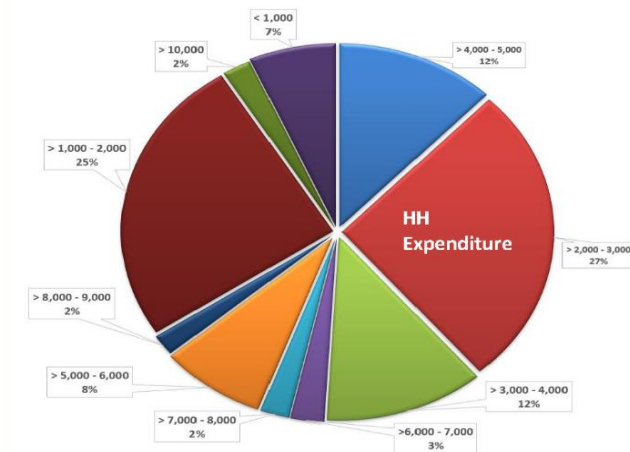
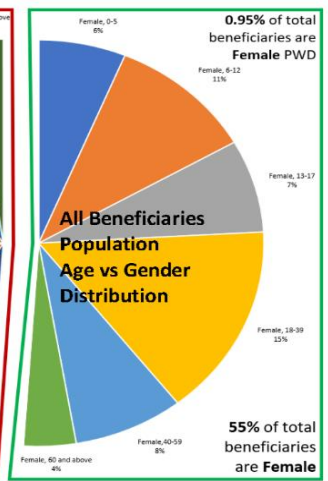
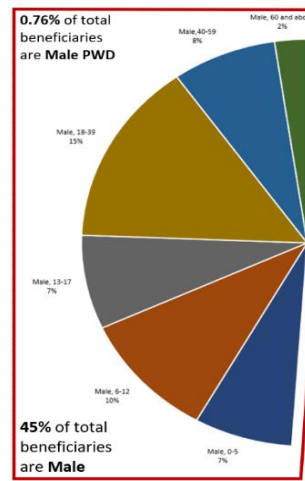
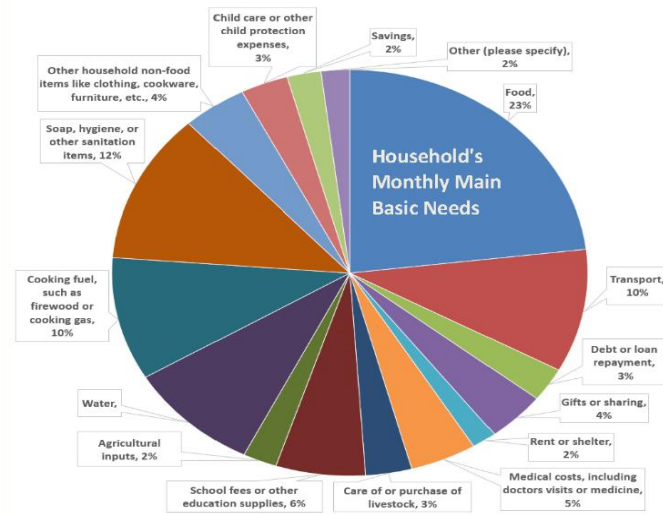


PDM Respondent Selection

271 sample size is above the minimum recommended sample size which is 190 for 632 HHs population, 5% margin of error, 90% confidence level, and 50% response distribution. The number of respondent decided for each village is based on proportional



TRCS have follow up the finding and provide on site clarification to the beneficiaries



Emergency Appeal

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2022/1-2024/4	Operation	MDRTO002
Budget Timeframe	2022-2024	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 29 May 2024

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRTO002 - Tonga - Volcano and Tsunami

Operating Timeframe: 18 Jan 2022 to 21 Jan 2024; appeal launch date: 23 Jan 2022

I. Emergency Appeal Funding Requirements

Thematic Area Code	Requirements CHF
AOF1 - Disaster risk reduction	977,000
AOF2 - Shelter	384,000
AOF3 - Livelihoods and basic needs	250,000
AOF4 - Health	105,000
AOF5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene	394,000
AOF6 - Protection, Gender & Inclusion	16,000
AOF7 - Migration	0
SFI1 - Strengthen National Societies	1,579,000
SFI2 - Effective international disaster management	143,000
SFI3 - Influence others as leading strategic partners	49,000
SFI4 - Ensure a strong IFRC	103,000
Total Funding Requirements	4,000,000
Donor Response* as per 29 May 2024	4,092,668
Appeal Coverage	102.32%

II. IFRC Operating Budget Implementation

Thematic Area Code	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
AOF1 - Disaster risk reduction	1,303,299	1,390,240	-86,942
AOF2 - Shelter	177,953	172,043	5,910
AOF3 - Livelihoods and basic needs	379,176	490,837	-111,660
AOF4 - Health	66,724	39,002	27,722
AOF5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene	76,416	45,210	31,206
AOF6 - Protection, Gender & Inclusion	514	283	231
AOF7 - Migration	0	2,390	-2,390
SFI1 - Strengthen National Societies	1,326,074	239,244	1,086,830
SFI2 - Effective international disaster management	160,283	90,139	70,144
SFI3 - Influence others as leading strategic partners	14,016	14,016	0
SFI4 - Ensure a strong IFRC	552,524	343,425	209,100
Grand Total	4,056,978	2,826,827	1,230,151

III. Operating Movement & Closing Balance per 2024/04

Opening Balance	0
Income (includes outstanding DREF Loan per IV.)	4,056,978
Expenditure	-2,826,827
Closing Balance	1,230,151
Deferred Income	0
Funds Available	1,230,151

IV. DREF Loan

* not included in Donor Response	Loan :	430,666	Reimbursed :	430,666	Outstanding :	0
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Emergency Appeal

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2022/1-2024/4	Operation	MDRTO002
Budget Timeframe	2022-2024	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 29 May 2024

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

MDRTO002 - Tonga - Volcano and Tsunami

Operating Timeframe: 18 Jan 2022 to 21 Jan 2024; appeal launch date: 23 Jan 2022

V. Contributions by Donor and Other Income

Opening Balance						0
Income Type	Cash	InKind Goods	InKind Personnel	Other Income	TOTAL	Deferred Income
American Red Cross	149,102				149,102	
Australian Red Cross	312,869		6,865		319,734	
Australian Red Cross (from Australian Government*)	306,964				306,964	
Australia - Private Donors	10,225				10,225	
British Red Cross	59,531				59,531	
Deloitte NSE Services Ltd	6,249				6,249	
European Commission - DG ECHO	206,963				206,963	
Great Britain - Private Donors	1,345				1,345	
Hong Kong Red Cross	23,603				23,603	
Irish Government	262,430				262,430	
Italian Government Bilateral Emergency Fund	103,910				103,910	
Japanese Red Cross Society	575,561				575,561	
Latvian Red Cross (from Latvian Government*)	51,564				51,564	
Nestle	31,913				31,913	
New Zealand Government	152,825				152,825	
New Zealand Red Cross	852,913		45,512		898,426	
On Line donations	16,718				16,718	
Red Cross of Monaco	10,289				10,289	
Republic of Korea Government	184,068				184,068	
Singapore Red Cross Society	33,807				33,807	
Six Nations Rugby Ltd	122,575				122,575	
Slovenia Government	31,010				31,010	
Taiwan Red Cross Organisation	2,725				2,725	
The Canadian Red Cross Society (from Canadian Gov	85,131				85,131	
The China Red Cross Foundation		152,500			152,500	
The Republic of Korea National Red Cross	27,735				27,735	
Tuvalu Red Cross Society	4,831				4,831	
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme (fron	45,894				45,894	
United States Government - USAID	179,350				179,350	
Total Contributions and Other Income	3,852,101	152,500	52,377	0	4,056,978	0
Total Income and Deferred Income					4,056,978	0