



# National Disaster Risk Management Office

Ministry of MEIDECC, Tonga

## NEWS LETTER

March-April 2024

*NDRMO's mission is strengthen resilience and improve preparedness to save lives, protect livelihoods and assets of communities and individuals from the impact of hazards*

*Established in 2007, with the enactment of DRM Act 2021, NDRMO focus on national disaster resilience through policy, planning & partnerships*

### NDRMO - News Updates

#### Response to Floods in Tonga

### Tonga's PM Calls for NDRMC Meetings to Assess Flood Situation & Coordinate Immediate Response



17 March, Prime Minister & Acting Minister for MEIDECC, Hon Hu'akavameiliku, chaired the meeting of NDRMC at NDRMO Office on evolving flood situation

Following heavy rains and flood warnings issued by Tonga Meteorological Services (TMS) for Tongatapu, 'Eua, Vava'u, and Ha'apai in the third week of March, the National Disaster Risk Management Committee (NDRMC) held crucial meetings on March 17 & 19 to assess the flood situation.

Chaired by Tonga's Prime Minister, Hon Hu'akavameiliku, these meetings at the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) focused on swiftly identifying flash flooding impacts and addressing immediate concerns in affected

communities. Updates on the flood situation were discussed, with TMS provided forecasts and NDRMO presented the Situation Report from the Interagency Rapid Assessment.

Responding to the flood situation, NDRMO activated the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC), conducted rapid assessments, deployed assessment teams, and provided cash assistance for the vulnerable families. Moreover, pumping operation conducted in the flood affected areas, maps were also developed of the affected area to facilitate communities.



The Prime Minister urged local authorities to prepare for potential flood emergencies, inspect evacuation facilities, and arrange evacuations if necessary. Relevant ministries were advised to stand ready with response strategies, with the Tonga Police Commissioner instructed to conduct patrols and monitor flood-prone areas.

With rainfall forecasted, NDRMO advises caution on inundated roads to prevent accidents. Citizens are urged to seek shelter in designated evacuation centers and halls if homes become inundated.



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## Tonga Hosts Regional Training on

# Women's Leadership in Tsunami-based Disaster Risk Reduction



From March 5th to 11th, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in partnership with the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), hosted Phase II - Women's Leadership in Tsunami-based Disaster Risk Reduction training in Nuku'alofa. The training attended by 23 participants with the primary objective to enhance the knowledge of women professionals in

tsunami-based disaster risk reduction (DRR), enabling them to better prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from tsunami-related disasters. Additionally, it aims to cultivate leadership skills among women, promote an inclusive approach to DRR, strengthen effective communication, and facilitate the development of multi-stakeholder coalitions.

Given the Pacific region's susceptibility to earthquakes and tsunamis due to its proximity to the Pacific Ring of Fire, drawing upon past disaster experiences is essential for effective risk mitigation.

Overall, the program specifically targets 100 women from Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), offering a comprehensive curriculum covering various aspects of DRR such as the Sendai Framework, Sustainable Development Goals, Gender-Responsive DRR, Multi-stakeholder Coalition in DRR, Community-Based DRR, and Climate Change.

Training help participants to develop tailored DRR action plans suited to their societies, while gaining insights from Japan's and the region's experiences and reconstruction efforts post-disasters, thus enhancing their overall learning.

Funding for this program is provided by the Government and People of Japan.

## Enhancing Tonga's Tsunami Response Capacity

# Workshop on Reviewing & Updating Agency-specific Tsunami SOPs



From 12-19 March, a workshop on reviewing and updating agency-specific tsunami Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) held at the National Disaster Risk Management Office in Nuku'alofa.

UNESCO, together with the National Disaster Risk Management Office, Tonga Meteorological Services and Tonga Geological Services collaborated on week-long working session.

The workshop aims to enhance Tonga's tsunami response capacity, encompassing seismic and non-seismic sources. These include addressing previous SOPs reviews and recommendations, defining tsunami zones, updating decision-support tools, aligning with Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWS) guidelines, and conducting mock exercises for regional and local SOPs.

Following the Hunga-Tonga Hunga-Ha'apai



(HTHH) Volcano eruption and tsunami, PTWS established a Task Team on HTHH Volcano Tsunami Hazard Response. Interim Procedures and PTWS Products, effective from March 15, 2022, were developed. PTWC also provided Interim Products and a User's Guide, tested in a regional exercise on November 9, 2022, by members of the WG-PICT.



## NDRMO Participated in the Pacific Regional Disaster & Emergency Managers Meeting in Fiji



From April 8th to 12th, the Director of the National Disaster Risk Management Office, Mr. Mafua-'i-vai'utukakau Maka and NDRMO Senior Staff, Mr. 'Aisea Fungavai attended the Pacific Regional Disaster and Emergency Managers' Meeting held at Tanoa International Hotel in Nadi, Fiji.

The significant gathering served as a consolidation of all meetings convened by the Pacific Community (SPC), brought

together Directors of National Disaster Management Offices and Heads of Fire and Police from across the Pacific. Throughout the week, alongside this meeting, the Steering Committees of crucial projects such as the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance Project – Phase II, Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific Project - Phase 2, and the Pacific Humanitarian Warehousing Program were also convened.

Led by the Pacific Community (SPC), these projects represent substantial investments aimed at strengthening climate and disaster resilience in the Pacific in collaboration with members and partners.

The 5-day meeting was officially opened by Hon. Sakiasi Ditoka, the Minister responsible for the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management, representing the Government of Fiji.

## Regional Workshop on Advancing Anticipatory Actions: NDRMO Highlighted Country's Resilience Measures



The regional meeting on Advancing Anticipatory Action: The Pacific Way, held in Nadi, Fiji, from April 15-16. The National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) actively participated and highlighted the importance of anticipatory actions at the country level in reducing disaster risks and protecting lives, livelihoods, and community resilience. Anticipatory Action (AA) involves proactive measures triggered before a crisis, translating warnings into actions to mitigate negative impacts, thus alleviating pressure on resources.

The event emphasized the significance of people-centered and community-based

early warnings and AA in achieving initiatives like the Weather Ready Pacific (WRP) and the United Nations Secretary General's Early Warnings for All (EW4All).

AA meeting aimed to review progress, enhance capacity, and identify priorities for advancing anticipatory approaches in the Pacific. With the participation of governments, NGOs, and international organizations, the event facilitates knowledge sharing and discussions on integrating AA into existing frameworks, contributing to a more resilient Pacific community.

## NDRMO Attends Workshop in Fiji on Advancing Pacific Early Warning System



Stakeholders gathered at Fiji's Shangri-La Resort for the Collaborating for Inclusive Early Warnings Systems and Climate Services in the Pacific Regional Coordination Workshop on April 17, 2024. The event aimed to strengthen early warning systems (EWSs) and climate services in the region, emphasizing collaboration and action. Leveraging initiatives like the Weather Ready Pacific (WRP) Programme and Early Warnings for All (EW4All), participants focused on making warnings more accessible and inclusive. Aligned with the Pacific Roadmap for Improved Climate Services (PRICS), the workshop aimed to foster resilience through strategic partnerships across sectors.



## NDRMO Attends WHO Regional Workshop in Manila on Development of National Action Plan for Health Security



The Director of the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) participated in a WHO training in Manila, Philippines on Development of National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) from March 12th to 14th. Representatives

from 12 Member States including Tonga practiced the NAPHS approach, identifying critical health security priorities and integrating them into costed capacity-building plans.

The workshop aimed to provide insight

into NAPHS implementation within disaster risk management, enhancing collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and effective resource allocation.

National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) are essential strategies for preventing, detecting, and responding to public health emergencies, focusing on surveillance, laboratory capacity, immunization, risk communication, and health worker readiness.

Since 2016, WHO has supported countries and partners in developing NAPHS, offering technical guidance and frameworks for evidence-based priority actions. Collaborative efforts and stakeholder feedback are key to building both immediate impact and long-term health security resilience globally.

### Tonga Utilize WHO's Toolkit for Health Risk Assessment

## NDRMO Participated in STAR Workshop



From February 28 to March 1, 2024, Tonga's Ministry of Health, in partnership with the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), organized/co-facilitated a multi-sectoral workshop using WHO's Strategic Toolkit for Assessing Risk (STAR) to analyze health risks.

During the three-day event, representatives from various sectors identified hazards, assessed their likelihood, seasonality, and potential impact. Insights from the workshop will

inform Tonga's emergency preparedness efforts, including upcoming evaluations and the national action plan for health security.

The workshop serves as a catalyst for consensus-building on priority hazards to enhance emergency preparedness, response, and multi-sectoral coordination.

Tonga is the first Pacific Island country to undertake a STAR risk assessment, supported by WHO to align with international frameworks for disaster risk reduction and health emergency management.

### UNDP Resident Representative for Pacific Office visited Tonga



On 20 March, Ms. Munkhtuya Altangerel, the new Resident Representative of the UNDP Pacific Office visited Tonga. She met with the Prime Minister of Tonga Hon. Hu'akavameiliku and discussed topics including recovery efforts of the HTHH volcanic eruption and tsunami, initiatives on climate change and disaster risk reduction, progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strategies for Ocean Governance and Blue Economy, endeavors in Youth Development and Employment, plans for COVID-19 recovery and Health security, as well as UNDP's assistance in strengthening governance in Pacific Parliaments and enhancing the enduring partnership with Tonga.



## Tonga Launches Disaster Displacement & Evacuation Center Management Cluster to Enhance Disaster Response & Support Displaced Communities



On 17 April, the Disaster Displacement and Evacuation Center Management (DDEM) Cluster launched at the UN Joint Programme Office in Nuku'alofa. The launch of new cluster is a significant step in addressing displacement challenges in the country. The cluster, endorsed within the DRM Act 2021, aims to enhance planning and response strategies, strengthen partnerships, and ensure

comprehensive support for affected communities. Co-led by the NDRMO and IOM, it focuses on protecting and meeting the needs of displaced individuals, drawing on lessons from Tonga's past disaster responses. With support from the IOM Development Fund, collaborative efforts from various stakeholders are sought to ensure effective disaster response and strategic coordination.



## Australian High Commission Briefs New Minister MEIDECC on DFAT Projects with the Ministry



On April 12, a delegation from the Australian High Commission (AHC), led by Her Excellency Rachael Moore, the High Commissioner of Australia to Tonga, met with the newly appointed Minister, HE Fekita 'Utoikamanu for the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change, and Communications (MEIDECC) along with the department heads, the CEO. During the meeting, the Deputy Australian High Commissioner,

Erin Gleeson briefed the new Minister about the DFAT projects with the Ministry of MEIDECC.

The Australian High Commissioner completing her tenure in Tonga, the Tongan government expressed profound gratitude to Her Excellency for her exemplary diplomatic service over the past several years.

The meeting also attended by HE Ewen McDonald, Australia's Special Envoy to the Pacific who is in Tonga.

## Australian DFAT Handed Over Tonga Essential Relief Supplies



On April 26th, Acting Australian High Commissioner Ms. Erin Gleeson along with the DFAT team handed over four containers filled with essential supplies from the Australian Government to Tonga. The shipment, received by the NDRMO, included tarps, family tents, hygiene kits (with 50 designated for persons with disabilities), large mobile storage units with lighting, and some additional shipping containers for storage. Mr. Vatulele Tuputupu, Acting CEO for the Ministry of MEIDECC, and Mr. Mafua-i'-vai'utukakau Maka, Director of NDRMO, expressed gratitude for Australia's support. The construction of the national warehouse, funded by DFAT, highlights Australia's commitment to strengthen the resilience of Tonga's communities in the face of disasters.



## NDRMO Briefs Delegation of US Congress & UN Foundation on HTHH Impacts & Response Efforts



On April 24, a delegation includes members from the United States Congress and the United Nations Foundation visited Tonga, where they engaged with government officials and civil society representatives. During their one-day visit, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) briefed the Congress on the impacts and response measures following the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai

(HTHH) eruption triggered tsunami in the country.

The delegation also visited areas impacted by the HTHH eruption and tsunami particularly 'Atata community at 'Atata Si'i Hihifo and held discussions with affected communities. The 'Atata community expressed appreciation for the support provided by the delegation, recognizing



the difficulties encountered in relocating from their island village to Tongatapu.

The delegation accompanied by representatives from various organizations, including the UN, the Pacific Humanitarian Team, UN Agencies, the Red Cross, and international NGOs, emphasizing a collaborative approach in addressing the aftermath of the disaster.

## First Responders Hold Urgent Meeting: Tofua Volcanic Situation, Associated Risks & Readiness Discussed



On April 29th, an urgent meeting was convened by Mr. Vatulele Tuputupu, the Acting CEO for the Ministry of MEIDECC and Chair for Logistic and Coordination Cluster, at the National Disaster Risk Management Office.

The meeting was attended by representatives from various agencies, including the National Disaster Risk Management Office, His Majesty's Armed Forces, Tonga Fire & Emergency Services, Tonga Police, Ministry of Health, Tonga

Red Cross, Tonga Geological Services, Tonga Meteorological Services, and the Ministry of Finance.

During the meeting, Tonga Geological Services provided briefings on the ongoing volcanic activity at Tofua Island, associated risks. Discussions focused on analyzing potential risks, coordinating response efforts, and ensuring preparedness in response to the escalating volcanic activity.

## NDRMO Enhances Disaster Management Capacity with Satellite Technology Training



On April 8th, NDRMO technical staff joined a virtual training led by Mr. Takeshi Shiraishi from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). Focused on satellite technology for disaster management, it aligned with NDRMO's mission to enhance preparedness. Emphasizing satellite's important role in decision-making and response coordination, the session included a simulation exercise. Tonga's UN Charter for Disaster authorization is a milestone, reflecting inaugural participation. The session highlighted Sentinel Asia's importance, an organization dedicated to satellite integration in the Asia-Pacific region. NDRMO aims to strengthen networks through membership, enhancing disaster risk reduction and mitigation capabilities.



## Preserving Cultural Heritage:

# NDRMO & Ministry of Tourism Collaborates to Conduct Disaster Risk Reduction Sessions

The collaboration between the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) and the Ministry of Tourism highlights a proactive approach in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage against potential disasters.

Through specialized Disaster Risk Reduction sessions, conducted in Kanokupolu on March 28 and 'Atata on April 10, communities were empowered with crucial knowledge and strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of disasters

on their cultural heritage. By increasing awareness and improving preparedness at the grassroots level, this joint effort not only strengthens resilience but also underlines the significance of preserving cultural identity in challenging circumstances.

These presentations demonstrate the dedication of both organizations to promote sustainable development and uphold the rich heritage for future generations.



28 March, NDRMO conducting Disaster Risk Reduction Session in Kanokupolu



10 April, NDRMO conducting Disaster Risk Reduction Session in Atata

## Highlights of March-April 2024



8 March: UNITAR Tsunami Based DRR Training Participants visited NDRMO office & National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC)



12 March: UNESCO together with NDRMO, Tonga Met & Geological Services at Agency-Specific Tsunami SOPs review workshop



17 April: Disaster Displacement & Evacuation Center Management (DDEM) Cluster launched at the UN Joint Programme Office in Nuku'alofa



8 April: Director NDRMO Mr. Mafua-i'-vai'utukakau Maka, speaking at the Pacific Disaster & Emergency Managers Meeting in Fiji



18 March: NDRMO together with Tonga Fire & Emergency Pumping water in flood affected areas



18 April: NDRMO along with Tonga Met Services at the "Early Warning for All" Workshop held in Nadi, Fiji

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