



PRESS RELEASE

DRM Decentralization Roll-Out: NDRMO Tonga Concludes Tongatapu Consultations on Establishing Village DRM Committees and Plans – Now Expands to Outer Islands



15 April 2025 – Nuku'alofa, Tonga

Today, on 15 April, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) Tonga held its final consultation with the District and Town Officers of Tongatapu, marking the conclusion of the first phase of the nationwide decentralization process for Disaster Risk Management (DRM). These consultations provided an opportunity to listen to issues, gather feedback, and build understanding around the new DRM structure under the 2021 DRM Act and the National DRM Policy 2023–2030.

Approximately 40 officers from Tongatapu's local government attended the session, adding their voices to a series of consultations that began on 31 March 2025 with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), NGOs, faith-based and community-based organizations, and local implementing partners. These engagements have collectively involved over 140 participants from various sectors.

Mr. Mafua-'i-Vai'utukakau Maka, Director of the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), stated: *"Completing the consultations in Tongatapu is a major milestone in our journey to decentralize disaster risk management across Tonga. This initiative is about more than compliance with the DRM Act—it is about shifting decision-making and preparedness into the hands of our communities. By establishing Village DRM Committees and supporting them to lead the development of Village DRM Plans, we are building a stronger, more inclusive, and*

more resilient Tonga—where every village plays a central role in protecting lives, livelihoods, and local development.”

The consultations focused on the establishment of Village Disaster Risk Management Committees (VDRMCs) and the development of Village Disaster Risk Management Plans (VDRMPs). Each VDRMC will be chaired by the Town Officer and composed of eight community representatives—ensuring meaningful participation from women, youth, and persons with disabilities. These local plans will inform DRM planning and budgeting at the island and national levels.

With Tongatapu consultations now complete, NDRMO will extend the process to the outer island groups—Ha’apai, Vava’u, ‘Eua, and the Niuas. By the end of 2025, the initiative aims to cover all 23 districts and engage over 1,200 individuals through planning workshops and validation of VDRMPs and community budgets.

This initiative represents a transformative shift in Tonga’s approach to disaster risk management—moving from a centralized system to one that is community-driven and inclusive. By placing leadership, planning, and decision-making at the village level, the DRM decentralization process ensures that preparedness and resilience are rooted in local knowledge, participation, and ownership.

This roll-out is supported by the Pacific Community’s (SPC) Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific (BSRP II) Programme and technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

ENDS

For more information, or media interviews please contact:

Mr. Mafua Vai’utukakau Maka,
Director, NDRMO Tonga,
Email: vaiutukakaumaka@gmail.com