



National Disaster Risk Management Office

Ministry of MEIDECC, Tonga

NEWS LETTER

May-June 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

Tonga Represents at GFDRR Partnership Days & Understanding Risk Global Forum 2024 in Japan



On 17 June, Director of NDRMO, Mr. Mafua-'i-Vai'utukakau Maka, presents Tonga's disaster risk management initiatives at GFDRR Partnership Days, highlighting the nation's extreme vulnerability to natural hazards & proactive strategies for resilience

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Tonga is represented at the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) Partnership Days and Understanding Risk Global Forum 2024 in Himeji, Japan, from July 16-21, 2024.

The week-long event brought together members, observers, partners, and World Bank staff from around the globe to discuss and exchange insights on disaster risk management.

The Tongan delegation includes Mr. Mafua-'i-Vai'utukakau Maka, Director of the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), and Director Vatulele of MEIDECC's Corporate Services. On June 17, 2024, during the GFDRR Partnership Days, Mr. Maka, as one of the panelist presented Tonga's disaster risk management initiatives, vulnerability and disaster risks, challenges, financial impacts

of past disasters, and highlighted the technical and financial support provided by GFDRR and the World Bank.

The forum aims to showcase GFDRR's impact in enhancing resilience against shocks, foster the exchange of lessons and insights among policymakers and practitioners, and address challenges in

resilience and risk governance from community to national levels.

The event underscores GFDRR's commitment to proactive disaster risk management and inclusive resilience, emphasizing technical assistance, strategic partnerships, and policy influence to tackle global challenges.



Identifying risks, vulnerabilities and actionable DRM Plan for Vava'u: NDRMO & World Bank Hosts Workshop to Advance Multi-Hazard Risk Assessment



On 14 May, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), with technical support from the World Bank and a consortium of consultants, led by Risk Engineering and Development (RED), conducted a stakeholder workshop at Tanoa Hotel Conference Room in Nuku'alofa.

The workshop aimed to advance the proposed Multi-Hazard Risk Assessment (MHRA) and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) plan for Vava'u, aligning with Tonga's DRM Act and Policy. Key

stakeholders from ministries, agencies, partners, and civil society attended to collaborate on identifying risks, vulnerabilities, and actionable DRM strategies for Vava'u. The agenda included sessions on key findings, roundtable discussions, breakout sessions, and rapporteur summaries.

Follow-up meetings will be held in Vava'u. This effort underscores the commitment of the Tongan government and its partners to enhancing disaster resilience and sustainable development in Vava'u.



NDRMO & IDMC Collaborate: Disaster Displacement Workshop Addresses Data Gaps in Tonga



On 9 May, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) collaborated to host the Disaster Displacement Exploratory Workshop and

Training at Davina House, Tongatapu.

The workshop aimed to present findings from the Tonga Data Ecosystem Mapping Report and gather ideas for addressing

data gaps within government and non-government sectors. It also provided training for evacuation center and displacement cluster members on understanding and applying displacement indicators.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Vatulele Tuputupu, Acting CEO of MEIDECC, stressed the crucial role of disaster displacement data, especially in the aftermath of events like the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai eruption & Tsunami. Mr. Vatulele stressed that improving data management and sharing remains our primary focus to assist internally displaced persons, with sincere thanks to IDMC for their invaluable support.

More than 30 attendees included representatives from NDRMO, cluster leads, first responders, Tonga Police, relevant government departments, and NGOs.

NDRMO, UNDRR & UNITAR Jointly Convened Stakeholders Consultation Advances Water Sector Resilience in Tonga



On May 10, 2024, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (with the support from UNOSAT/UNITAR) jointly convened a consultation with water sector stakeholders at NDRMO Conference room,

building upon the results of a previous workshop in Tonga.

The consultation aimed to deepen understanding of water-specific challenges and current infrastructure resilience, feeding into recommendations for the Enhancing Infrastructure Resilience

through Strengthened Governance project. This project, implemented in Tonga, utilizes the Global Methodology for Infrastructure Resilience Reviews to analyze water sector challenges, resilience levels, and propose enhancements, crucial for achieving SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation.

Tsunami Preparedness Workshop for Mission School Teachers in Tongatapu



On 11 June, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), with generous support from the Pacific Resilience Programme (PREP) Tonga Project, conducted a Tsunami Disaster Risk Reduction Workshop for teachers from Mission Schools across Tongatapu.

The event commenced with a welcome address from the Director of NDRMO, who emphasized the importance of using this opportunity to reflect on past events and enhance the teachers' role as custodians of future generations.

This crucial workshop aimed to strengthen the resilience of schools by increasing

teachers' knowledge on various aspects of tsunami preparedness, including Tonga's risk profile, tsunami early warning systems, hazard maps, preparedness measures, safety protocols during warnings, and gender and protection issues during evacuations.

Sessions were jointly conducted by NDRMO, Tonga Geological Services, Tonga Meteorological Services, Tonga Police, and the Gender and Protection Advisor from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Additionally, the workshop encouraged participants to learn from each other by identifying strengths and opportunities to improve their tsunami response plans.

NDRMO Provides Briefing on Tsunami Evacuation Maps & Safe Zones



In early June, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) conducted a briefing session at the U.S. Consulate office in Nuku'alofa, following an invitation from the U.S. Embassy. The session focused on Tsunami Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness, NDRMO presented detailed information on tsunami evacuation maps and designated safe spots throughout Tonga. The U.S. Embassy expressed appreciation to NDRMO for their ongoing efforts in disaster risk reduction and their significant contributions to bolstering the country's safety and resilience.

NDRMO Conducts Evacuation & Cold-Debriefing After Major Earthquake



Following a 6.7 magnitude earthquake on May 27, 2024, the National Disaster Risk Management Office issued an evacuation order for low-lying areas in Tongatapu and Ha'apai. Sirens were activated, and local authorities urged residents to move inland to higher ground. The tsunami alert issued at 9:55am was canceled at 11:00am after the threat passed.

Later that day, NDRMO held a debriefing session chaired by Director Mr. Mafua-'i-Vai'utukakau Maka, with officers from His Majesty's Armed Forces - Tonga, Tonga Police, Tonga Fire & Emergency Services, Tonga Red Cross Society, Tonga Meteorological Services, Tonga Geological Services, Ministry of Health, Department of Communications, MEIDECC, and Tonga Broadcasting Commission. The session included a comprehensive SWOT analysis

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to enhance future tsunami preparedness. NDRMO presented findings from debriefings in Vava'u and Ha'apai, aiming to refine national response strategies. The debriefing highlighted the importance of collaboration and informed planning in mitigating disaster risks and ensuring community safety across Tonga.



On 27 May earthquake, evacuation drills proved effective as students and staff swiftly moved to safety at St. Mary's ground

NDRMO-Led Team Attends Disaster Management Seminar in China



In June, a team of seven from Tonga, led by NDRMO, attended a two-week seminar on Disaster Management for Pacific Island Countries in China. The team includes Lazarus Vaipulu from NDRMO, Christopher Baker, Owen Tuipulotu, and Alani Vaomoetou from Tonga Fire & Emergency Services, Kelepi Hufanga, Tupou Ika, and Nikolasi Heni from Tonga Geological Services, Government of Tonga, alongside Malia Veia from the Department of Communications, MEIDECC, and Ofa Fonua from MEIDECC Corporate Services. Their participation was made possible through support from the Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China.

NDRMO Tours ADF Reliant to Strengthen Disaster Relief Collaboration with Australia



On June 5, a team from the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) visited the Australian Defense Vessel (ADV) Reliant on the invitation of the Australian DFAT.

Hosted by Australian High Commissioner HE Brek Batley, the visit featured a comprehensive tour of the vessel and a lunch reception, underscoring ongoing

partnerships in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).

The ADV Reliant plays a crucial role in HADR operations across the Pacific.

The vessel's presence highlights Australia's commitment to enhancing collaboration with Pacific partners, ensuring prompt response to regional needs.

Ukraine's Ambassador Visits NDRMO; discussed Climate Change & DRR



On 4th June, Acting CEO for MEIDECC and NDRMO Director Mr. Mafua Maka welcomed Ukraine's Ambassador HE Vasyl Myroshnychenko to NDRMO, fostering a dialogue on climate change and disaster management. They discussed strategies to mitigate climate impacts and enhance disaster preparedness, expressing mutual interest in sharing best practices and strengthening resilience against natural disasters.

NZDF Leads Exercise Tropic Twilight to Strengthen Tonga's Disaster Preparedness in Ha'apai

Exercise Tropic Twilight, led by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), is an annual humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) exercise conducted in the Pacific region.

The exercise involves NZDF personnel working alongside regional partners, including Pacific Island nations, to enhance disaster response capabilities and improve coordination during emergencies. Activities typically include medical support, engineering projects, and logistical operations to build resilience and preparedness for natural disasters such as

cyclones, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

This year, the exercise was held in Ha'apai for the second consecutive year (5 weeks in May & June) focusing on recovery from the 2022 volcanic eruption and tsunami. A multinational team of 60 worked in the Ha'apai islands, renovating community centers, improving schools, and upgrading meteorological stations. Training on equipment maintenance was also provided to community members.

The exercise featured significant collaboration with His Majesty's Armed Forces (HMAF), enhancing local disaster

response capabilities through various projects and a free dental clinic. Training for local officials on generator use further boosted emergency preparedness.

The exercise concluded with a ceremony attended by H.E. Matthew Howell, Governor of Ha'apai, highlighting strengthened international partnerships and significant progress in Tonga's disaster preparedness.

The primary aim of Exercise Tropic Twilight is to strengthen collective response efforts and support affected communities more effectively.



NDRMO Facilitates Disaster Risk Reduction Session for Lapaha Youth Mentors



On 19 June, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) expressed its gratitude to the Talitha Project for the invitation to facilitate a session on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) during their Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA) and Preparedness for a More Resilient Future to Disasters and Climate Change training for Lapaha Youth Mentors. The session took place at the Tanoa Hotel and was led

by Ms. Luisa Taunga on behalf of the NDRMO. During the interactive session, the youth mentors learned about Tonga's risk profile, disaster preparedness, and the risks faced by vulnerable groups in the community at evacuation centers. NDRMO extended its best wishes to the Talitha Project for the remainder of their training program and expressed anticipation for future collaboration opportunities.

NDRMO Presents on Disaster Preparedness and Tsunami Evacuation Zones at TASP EVENT



On 20 June, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) was invited by the Tonga Australia Support Platform (TASP) to provide a presentation on its core functions, disaster preparedness, and tsunami evacuation zones in Tongatapu. The presentation team included Ms. Ofa Masiwawa, Mr. Taha'amasilamea Manu, and NDRMO Acting Director, Mr. 'Aisea Fungavai.

Resilient Critical Infrastructure: Validation of Findings and Recommendations Workshop



The National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) under the Ministry of MEIDECC, in collaboration with the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), hosted the Resilient Critical Infrastructure Review Findings and Recommendations Workshop. The Project was initiated in August 2023 as a gap analysis of the disaster resiliency of four critical sectors in

Tonga: Water, Energy, Transport, and Telecommunications.

The gap analysis concluded with findings and proposed recommendations for improving the resiliency of the critical infrastructure sector. The Project brought together technical officers and practitioners on Day 1 to validate findings and on Day 2 these were presented to a group of stakeholder CEOs. Recommendations were endorsed and a Final Report is currently being developed for the Government of Tonga.

NDRMO & RED Conduct Risk Assessment in Vava'u



From 23 to 30 May, a team from the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) and Risk Engineering and Development (RED) traveled to Vava'u to conduct risk qualification and data collection. This followed a stakeholder workshop held in Tongatapu on 14 May, which aimed to advance the proposed Multi-Hazard Risk Assessment (MHRA) and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) plan for Vava'u. The team is assessing various risk aspects, including vulnerabilities and exposures across the island.

NDRMO and MEIDECC Hosts New Zealand Representatives in Ha'apai



On May 21, Mr. Mafua Maka, Director of the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), accompanied by the MEIDECC branch in Ha'apai, welcomed Ms. Olivia Philpott, First Secretary of the New Zealand High Commissioner, and LT.COL Aimee Davis of the New Zealand Defence Force at the Emergency

Operation Centre in Ha'apai. The visit included a site inspection of the land allocated for the new NDRMO Warehouse in Ha'apai, funded by the Government of New Zealand, followed by a tour of the Emergency Operation Centre.

Tsunami Risk Reduction Workshop for District & Town Officers



On 9 May, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) conducted a Tsunami Disaster Risk Reduction Awareness Workshop for the District and Town Officers of Tongatapu at BSP Bank. The workshop was jointly facilitated by NDRMO, Tonga Geological Services, and Tonga Meteorological Services. Aimed at strengthening the officers' knowledge on tsunami causes, vulnerable areas, and hazard maps, the workshop also emphasized integrating Gender & Protection into Village Disaster Risk Management Committees and Plans in accordance with the DRM Act 2021. This initiative was supported by the PREP project.

Disaster Risk Reduction Training for Latter-day Saints Office Managers



On June 26, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) conducted an informational training on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for the Tonga Country Office Managers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The training aimed to enhance the DRR knowledge of the managers so they can educate their respective departments effectively. The session covered NDRMO's

Core Functions, Tonga's Emergency Structure, the country's Risk Profile, Preparedness measures, and Tsunami Evacuation Zones in Tongatapu.

NDRMO expressed gratitude to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the opportunity to conduct this training, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in strengthening disaster preparedness across communities.

Tsunami Risk Reduction Awareness Session at St. Andrew's High School



On June 18, NDRMO held a Tsunami Disaster Risk Reduction session for students and a workshop for teachers at St. Andrew's High School. This event followed a request from the school after two staff members attended a similar workshop in May. The student session covered Tonga's Risk Profile, disaster preparedness, and the importance of a 72-hour emergency bag. The teacher workshop included NDRMO's core functions, Early Warning Systems, Standard Procedures for Earthquakes and Tsunamis, and School Emergency Response Plans.

NDRMO Conduct Tsunami Risk Reduction Awareness Session for BSP Staff

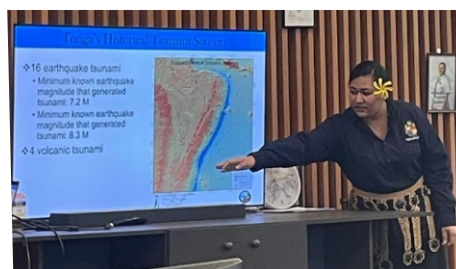
On May 9, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), in collaboration with Tonga Meteorological Services, the Government of Tonga, and Tonga Geological Services, conducted a Tsunami Disaster Risk Reduction Awareness Session for the staff of Bank South Pacific (BSP) in Tonga.

The initiative, supported by the Pacific Resilience Project (PREP), aimed to educate BSP employees on the essential actions to take in the event of a tsunami.

The session covered a range of topics including tsunami warning signals, evacuation routes, and safety protocols. It emphasized the importance of immediate and appropriate responses to ensure the safety of both staff and clients.

Given BSP's location in a tsunami-vulnerable area in Nuku'alofa, this training is part of the bank's commitment to disaster preparedness. The bank aims to

equip its employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to handle such emergencies, thereby enhancing the overall safety and resilience of the community.



Disaster Risk Reduction Workshops in Lofanga Community



On May 27, NDRMO conducted a Disaster Risk Reduction Workshop at the Lofanga Community Settlement in Lifuka, Ha'apai, supported by the PREP Project. The workshop included presentations and group discussions on preparedness and response for tropical cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis. The community also shared their experiences and challenges faced during tsunami evacuations.

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