



NEWS LETTER

January-February 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

From the Director NDRMO

Advancing Disaster Risk Reduction: NDRMO's 2024 Priorities

In 2023, Tonga took significant steps towards disaster risk reduction by enacting the National DRM Act 2021 and implementing the National DRM Policy 2023-2030. Building upon this foundation, the NDRMO in 2024 is intensifying its efforts to strengthen disaster risk reduction across Tonga. Central to these efforts are several key priorities outlined by the NDRMO. Firstly, there is a concerted effort to ensure widespread familiarity with the provisions of the DRM Act 2021 throughout Tonga, coupled with securing financing for its effective implementation. Concurrently, the development of DRM regulations and a comprehensive National DRM Plan as well as the disaster risk assessment and quantification is prioritize for the first half of this year. This is to provide a structured framework for disaster risk management at various levels. Additionally, the review and enhancement of existing emergency management strategies, such as the Strategic Roadmap for Emergency Management, and the updating of standard operating procedures for various DRM entities and emergency scenarios are crucial tasks on the agenda. Furthermore, there is a focus on decentralization initiatives, including the establishment of repositioned resources in vulnerable areas and the strengthening of multi-hazard disaster risk assessments. Initiatives such as tsunami readiness mapping, the establishment of a GIS database, and the integration of risk data systems aim to enhance preparedness and response capabilities. Simultaneously, efforts are directed towards ensuring inclusivity by addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, and enhancing community education and awareness on disaster preparedness. Lastly, investments in infrastructure resilience and the improvement of early warning systems underscore the commitment to safeguarding lives and minimizing the impact of natural disasters on Tonga's communities.

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International Recovery Forum 2024 Japan

NDRMO Highlights Resilient Recovery Efforts Amidst Climate Risks in Tonga



The Director of the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) represented Tonga at the International Recovery Forum 2024 held from January 24-26, 2024, at the Kobe International Conference Center in Japan.

During the forum, Tonga showcased notable successes and ongoing efforts in disaster risk reduction (DRR), spotlighting its resilient recovery in the face of

escalating climate risks. As the world moves forward with the implementation of the Sendai Framework (SF), the Midterm Review (MTR SF) has shed light on both achievements and persistent hurdles, underscoring the urgent need to expedite endeavors towards resilient recovery.

The 2024 International Recovery Forum seeks to tackle the findings of the MTR SF

by identifying priority action areas, exchanging practical insights, and charting pathways for implementation. Serving as the sole annual global conference dedicated to disaster recovery, the IRP Forum plays a crucial role in fostering dialogue, sharing best practices, and advancing strategies for resilient reconstruction.

Tonga's Annual Planners Forum Advances Risk & Gender-Informed Development in National Planning



From January 31 to February 2, 2024, Tonga hosted its Annual Planner's Forum in Nuku'alofa, emphasizing the advancement of risk and gender-informed approaches for national development planning.

The three-day Forum brought more than 120 government participants, including officials from various sectors including

NDRMO and engaged in open dialogue, promoting collaboration, discuss peer learning, knowledge exchange, and the understanding of "Risk and Gender-Informed Development" within national planning and budgeting processes. The National Planning Division collected feedback to enhance processes and identify priorities for the year.

In his keynote address, Acting Prime

Minister Hon. Samiu Vaipulu highlighted the ongoing impact of natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and droughts, on Tonga's development and economy. Emphasizing the forum's theme, he stressed the need to shift focus from the magnitude of disasters to ensuring all developments are risk-informed, underscoring the responsibility to remain vigilant in the face of natural hazards.

Established in 2017, the Annual Planners Forum aligns with Tonga's development frameworks, fostering effective decision-making and governance through a risk-informed perspective. This year Forum was hosted by the National Planning Division of the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Women's Division, at Fa'onelua Convention Center.

Dr. Sivendra Michael's Farewell: NDRMO Acknowledges Contributions



The National Disaster Risk Management Office acknowledged the significant contributions of the Dr. Sivendra Michael over the two years (2021-2023) for the Tonga. Dr. Michael supported NDRMO in strengthen disaster risk reduction and resilient building in Tonga

through deployment of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Dr Michael is joining as Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Government of Fiji. NDRMO wishing for his future success for his new role.

MEIDECC Budget Retreat 2024

The Ministry of MEIDECC Heads of Departments Retreat was held on 20-23 January 2024 at the Oholei Beach Resort. The Retreat was opened by the Chief Secretary & Secretary to Cabinet, and CEO for MEIDECC, Mr. Sione Pulotu 'Akau'ola. The attendees included the Directors of the 9 departments together with their Deputies. The main focus of the retreat was the Corporate Plan and Budget for the upcoming FY2024-2025. Retreat was successful and aim of the event achieved through various presentations, and interactive group discussions.

UN OCHA Pacific Deputy Head Leads Mission to Strengthen Collaboration with NDRMO in Tonga



From January 31 to February 2, Mr. Peter Krakolinig, the Deputy Head of the UN OCHA Pacific, led his team visited Tonga. The 3-day mission focused on reinforcing collaboration with the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), assisting in refining Terms of Reference (TORs) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with the Inter-cluster Coordinator, engaging key

partners to enhance coordination in disaster management and ongoing bilateral communication with NDRMO is in place to ensure continuous support and coordination. These collective efforts are aimed at enhancing capacities of NDRMO as well as strengthening Tonga's capabilities in disaster management.

Tonga's Resilience: 2 Years After HTHH

January 15th, mark the second anniversary since the Honga-Tonga-Honga-Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami struck Tonga. Let's pause to honor the incredible strength and resilience of the Tongan people who have been rebuilding their lives in the face of nature's raw power. The HTHH event caused damages, estimated at US\$90.4M (TOP 208 million), equivalent to 18.5% of Tonga's GDP. Approximately 85,000 people across Tonga were affected experiencing the worst of the tsunami and disruptions to water supplies due to ashfall. As we reflect on the lives lost, let's also acknowledge the ongoing recovery efforts. Tonga has shown remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. On this occasion, let's extend our support through global solidarity. Consider contributing to organizations aiding Tonga's recovery.

UN OCHA Trained NDRMO through Microsoft Power BI Training for Enhanced Disaster Response in Tonga



On February 2, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) Information Management Unit - Pacific conducted a Microsoft Power BI training session for the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) staff. UN OCHA Office of the Pacific has been actively supporting the NDRMO in digitizing its Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) questionnaire using the Kobotoolbox

platform. Both UN OCHA and NDRMO are actively collaborating to build a dynamic dashboard using the IDA questionnaire aimed to facilitate quick decision-making by presenting key information through graphs and maps. This initiative is part of UN OCHA's ongoing engagement with Tonga, focusing on enhancing preparedness for potential cyclones or other disasters during the cyclone season.

A Brief DRM Act 2021

The Disaster Risk Management Act 2021 repeal and replaced 20 years old the National Emergency Management Act 2007. The new DRM Act establishes a legal framework for efficient disaster risk reduction, emergency response coordination, and post-disaster recovery. The Act introduces key features including clarifying roles, defining emergencies, establishing relief measures, and strengthening provisions for effective disaster management. The Act establishes key governing bodies, including the Ministry for disaster risk management, the National DRM Office (NDRMO), National DRM Management Committee, National DRM Operations sub-committee, National DRM Recovery sub-committee, Island DRM Committees, and Village DRM Committees, each with updated names reflecting their roles in disaster management.

Enhancing Pacific Resilience: NDRMO Joins Regional Disaster Risk Finance Workshop in Fiji

The Pacific Region Disaster Risk Finance Workshop, convened from 6-8 February 2024 in Suva, Fiji, aimed to enhance financial resilience in the region by raising awareness and deepening understanding of Disaster Risk Financing (DRF) at both national and regional levels. Organized by PCRIC in collaboration with the UK Center for Disaster Protection, the World Food Program, and the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP), the workshop gathered stakeholders committed to mitigating disaster risks.

The National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) of Tonga participated in the event alongside senior officials from various entities engaged in disaster risk

management. The workshop's objectives included establishing networks among DRF practitioners to address emerging needs effectively and integrating DRF into public financial management systems for enhanced efficiency and coordination.

Key outcomes of the workshop included heightened awareness of DRF strategies and the establishment of stronger networks to facilitate collaboration in addressing disaster risks throughout the Pacific region. This collaborative effort underscores a concerted commitment to bolstering resilience and preparedness in the face of climate-related challenges.

NDRMO to Construct Warehouse in Ha'apai

NDRMO, with financial support from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), is undertaking the construction of a new warehouse in Ha'apai, totaling TOP\$1.3 million. The warehouse in Ha'apai will serve as a centralized hub for the reception and distribution of relief supplies throughout Ha'apai, catering to its diverse small and remote islands with a population of more than 5,000. The warehouse will feature a versatile multipurpose room designed for various NDRMO training and workshop activities. Furthermore, an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) communications room will be equipped with communication tools, ensuring the full functionality of the EOC in Ha'apai.

Empowering Pacific Resilience: Highlights from PARTner-2 Project Technical Workshop



The Pacific Risk Tool for Resilience project- Phase 2 (PARTner-2) Technical Workshop took place in Christchurch, New Zealand from February 12-16. The workshop's objective was to strengthen Pacific Island countries' resilience to climate change impacts through informed decision-making.

Two senior members from Tonga National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) participated in the workshop, which was facilitated by the Pacific Community (SPC) and National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA). The workshop attended by over 30 participants from SPC, NIWA, and various Pacific islands.

With support from MFAT, the workshop focused on critical aspects of the PARTner-2 project, such as refining workflows, finalizing models, selecting exposure datasets, and planning training sessions for Nexus and RiskScape.

These efforts aimed to improve understanding of climate risks and empower Pacific Island nations to develop national risk models, enabling informed decision-making on climate-related hazards.

The workshop's dedication and collaboration set the stage for significant strides in enhancing resilience and promoting sustainable development in the Pacific.

Senior NDRMO member awarded NZ Leadership Course Scholarship



Luisa Uai Taunga, a member of Senior Management team at NDRMO, has been awarded the Manaaki Scholarship for a two-week Public Sector Leadership course in Auckland, New Zealand. Commence from 12-23 February 2024, the course aims to enhance participants' strategic leadership skills within the public sector. It covers topics such as crisis management, inclusive leadership, policy design, civic engagement, and communication in diverse workplaces. The program is facilitated by the Public Policy Institute at the University of Auckland and features leading experts from various fields. Luisa sees this opportunity as crucial for improving her leadership abilities and enhancing NDRMO's engagement with the public and stakeholders.

NDRMO Conducts Disaster Risk Reduction Awareness Session for Tanoa Hotel Staff



The National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) conducted a disaster risk awareness training for Tanoa hotel staff on February 5, 2024, at the Tanoa Conference Room. The training aimed to enhance staff awareness of hazards and preparedness measures, particularly due to their coastal location and past tsunami experiences. It was the NDRMO's first awareness engagement with the hotels sector.

Objectives included providing Tanoa



Hotel management and employees with insights into NDRMO's responsibilities and services, understanding Tonga's vulnerability to risks, and addressing the country's primary hazards and preparedness levels for visitors.

The hotel staff positively engaged in the session and expressed interest in ongoing partnership and review of their existing plans, including drills and exercises.

Water Sector Plan Workshop

NDRMO attended the WASH Cluster workshop at Tanoa Hotel on February 1-2, 2024. The objectives highlighted the importance of water provision in disaster management, emphasizing the need for reliable water access in evacuation centers and planning for multi-hazard scenarios. Furthermore, it stressed the significance of gathering information from various agencies for informed decision-making.

The workshop will yield two key outputs: a National Water Sector Plan and an Information System for water-related data sharing. A follow-up workshop in March will delve into the detailed contents of the plan and discuss arrangements for the information system platform.

Inter-Cluster Coordination Committee Meeting for Cyclone Season Preparedness



On February 15th, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Committee (ICCC) convened its regular meeting focused on cyclone season preparedness at the National Emergency Management Office (NDRMO). The primary objective of this gathering was to enhance communication among cluster leads regarding their readiness for the ongoing cyclone season and other potential emergency hazards. NDRMO shared updates on the cyclone outlook and insights into the evolving situation.

During the meeting, each cluster lead provided updates on their cluster's

preparedness efforts, highlighting the diverse range of measures being undertaken to mitigate cyclone risks and ensure swift response in the event of a disaster. The exchange of information and experiences among the clusters further enhanced the collective readiness to tackle any challenges posed by the cyclone season and other emergency scenarios. At the end, the Chairman expressed gratitude to the Cluster Leads for their attendance at the coordination meeting and appreciate them for their readiness for cyclone season.

Highlights of GIS In-House Training



An in-house training on Geographical Information System (GIS) held at NDRMO office aimed at refreshing technical users' skills. The program focused on updating NDRMO's hosted data status, discussing GIS plans for 2024-2025, exploring mapping products for DRM and DRR activities, and formulating map templates aligned with DRM phases. The three-day session covered a range of hands-on topics, including ArcGIS Pro basics, ArcGIS Online, dashboard creation, field planning, drone capture techniques, data analysis, modeling, and cartography. A demo project utilizing internal databases and recent scenarios showcased potential products for NDRMO, with outcomes to be presented to management.

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