



NEWS LETTER

November-December 2023

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

2023 - NDRMO's Milestones in Disaster Risk Reduction

The year 2023 was quite peaceful in terms of natural disasters in Tonga, however, an El-Nino-induced drought hit the Vava'u region due to reduced rainfall. In response to the drought, NDRMO actively participated in desalinating water and delivering it to the affected communities. The year marked significant achievements for NDRMO, the Government of Tonga has enacted a new Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Act 2021 and enforced a new DRM Policy (2023-2030) to ensure the country is better prepared and able to respond to the increasing impacts and risks posed by disasters and climate change. Other key milestones of the year includes; a high-profile UN delegation led by UN SRSG visited Tonga to strengthen disaster risk reduction and resilience-building initiatives in the country; NDRMO hosted first time an international RedR Australia training course, "Essentials for Humanitarian Practice (EHP) which trained 27 humanitarian professionals for effectively respond to the natural hazards; a Tsunami Evacuation Drill successfully conducted; over 200 participants trained in Initial Damage Assessment; a strategic dialogue held with international humanitarian partners on country's DRR priorities. To better prepared and respond to disasters, NDRMO coordinated with Australian Defense Force to conduct Exercise Longreach; the Pacific Partnership 2023 by US Defense intensified preparation efforts. In addition, Disaster Risk Assessment training workshop and the launch of a new website demonstrated NDRMO's commitment in the field of disaster risk management. NDRMO expressing gratitude for collaboration and thanks to donors, partners, and stakeholders for their support in achieving these significant milestones.

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Pacific Partnership 2023 -

Civil-Military Coordination Workshop held to Enhance Disaster Preparedness



From 13th to 17th November 2023, more than thirty (30) participants were part of the "Pacific Partnership 2023 – Civil Military Coordination Workshop and Tabletop Exercise held at the Tanoa Hotel in Nuku'alofa. The event was a collaborative effort between the National Disaster Risk Management Office

(NDRMO) Tonga, Centre for Excellence in Disaster Risk Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM), the U.S Department of Defense, and the U.S Coast Guard.

Pacific Partnership is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and

disaster relief preparedness mission in the Indo-Pacific. The objective of this mission was to enhance regional interoperability and disaster response capabilities. The workshop and tabletop exercise aimed to enhance readiness, coordination, and response capabilities for various disasters, recognizing Tonga's vulnerability.

Pacific Partnership 2023 is supported by national and international partners, including the National Disaster Risk Management Office, His Majesty's Armed Forces (HMAF), relevant ministries, first responders, cluster leads, UN agencies, NGOs, and key entities such as the US Indo-Pacific Command, US Pacific Fleet, Naval Medical Forces Pacific, US Coast Guard, Centre for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM), and USAID' Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

SPC-NDRMO Workshop to Strengthen Disaster Risk Assessment Capacities



From 7-9 November 2023, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), in collaboration with the Pacific Community (SPC) and the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) conducted a 3-day Disaster Risk Assessment training in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. The training initiative is an integral part of the Pacific Risk Tools for Resilience – 2 (PARTneR-2) project, supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). Over 30 participants from

Tonga government and civil society gained skills in risk assessment and RiskScape software. The workshop covered various risk assessment topics, data requirements, vulnerability mapping, multi-hazard risk assessment, and hands-on exercises with RiskScape. This is the second of three workshops planned for 2023/2024, aimed at building resilience in Pacific Island Countries through partnerships and advanced tools.



Initial Damage Assessment Training held in Eua, Ha'apai & Vava'u

Following the successful completion of the training in Tongatapu, the training program extended to the outer islands, including 'Eua, Ha'apai, and Vava'u, in November. The comprehensive training involved over 200 participants from all four Tongan islands, comprising representatives from both government and non-government organizations, as well as district and town officers.

The primary objective of this training initiative is to equip participants with the necessary knowledge and skills essential for conducting effective Initial Damage

Assessment (IDA) in the aftermath of disasters or emergencies. The overall all goal of this program is to establish a cadre of trained enumerators who will play a vital role in supporting a well-coordinated national IDA team deployed to communities affected by disasters including enhance inter-agency cluster coordination in emergency response.

NDRMO expresses gratitude for the support of UNDP, making this IDA training possible, and acknowledges collaboration from the Planning Division of the Prime Minister's Office.

The IDA training program is a collaborative effort involving the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

NDRMO is dedicated to working closely with district and town officers, ensuring their comprehensive understanding of the specific data collection requirements during the IDA phase.



IDA training in Ha'apai (7th – 9th Nov)



IDA training in 'Eua (7th – 9th Nov)



IDA training in Vava'u, (21st – 23th Nov)

Tonga Hosts Critical Infrastructure Stress Testing and Resilient Workshop



In a collaborative effort between the Government of Tonga (MEIDECC), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), jointly with the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and United Nations Satellite Center conducted a two-day Critical Infrastructure Stress Testing and Principles Scorecard Workshop from

November 28-29, 2023, at the Tanoa Hotel.

The workshop is a vital component of the Enhancing Resilience of Critical Infrastructure through Strengthened Governance Project (ERCISG), initiated in August 2023, aimed at fortifying Tonga's critical infrastructure resilience during disasters. A key emphasis within the Workshop is the need for shared data to inform exposure and vulnerability of

Tonga's critical infrastructures.

With over 30 participants from sectors; Energy, Water, Telecommunications, and Transport, along with government ministries and private sector experts ensures a comprehensive discussion. The workshop is to identify vulnerabilities through stress-testing analysis and assessing current infrastructure resilience based on the Principles of Resilient Infrastructure.

NDRMO Drought Response in Vava'u Water desalinating & distribution to the affected population

The below-average rainfall and water shortage attributed to the El Nino phenomenon, has plunged Vava'u Island into a state of drought. Responding to this crisis, the National Disaster Risk Management Office has taken on the crucial responsibility of desalinating and purifying water to bring relief to the affected communities. A comprehensive response effort has been directed at 28 villages on Vava'u main island and 11 outer islands. Purified water distributed with a significant allocation of 5000 liters per village for the main island.

Simultaneously, the outer islands are receiving 450 liters each to address their specific water needs. To enhance the efficiency of the distribution process, water is being transported to designated tanks located in community and church halls. This initiative is designed to establish a more organized and streamlined distribution of water resources to the community. The goal is to alleviate the impact of the drought on the residents of Vava'u Island by ensuring a systematic and efficient supply of water to those in need.



Disaster Risk Reduction Workshop for District & Town Officers



On November 10th, NDRMO conducted a half-day workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction for the District and Town Officers of Lifuka and Foa in Ha'apai. The workshop aimed to enhance their knowledge and capacity for better disaster preparedness. During the workshop, the evacuation centers identified at each community. Tonga Meteorological Services, Government of Tonga gave a presentation on El Nino and the Tropical Cyclone Outlook for 2023/2024. The Officer In Charge for Tonga Fire & Emergency Services also gave a presentation and advisory on fire safety especially in this El Nino.

Strengthening Disaster Resilience for Visually Impaired Communities



On November 2, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO), in collaboration with the Tonga National Visual Impairment Association (TNVIA), conducted a Disaster Risk Reduction Training for its members. The primary objective of the training was to strengthen the capabilities of both members and their caregivers, equipping them for

improved preparedness, response, and recovery from natural hazards. Representative from TNVIA expressed gratitude, highlighting the significant contribution of the training to enhance members' readiness for future disasters. Mr. Taha-'a-masilamea Manu, the Disaster Works Officer from NDRMO, led the training session.

Single Parent in Emergency Workshop in Ha'apai



On November 8, with the support of UNICEF, NDRMO successfully conducted its inaugural Single Parent in Emergency Workshop in Tongaleleka, Ha'apai. The goal is to empower them to make informed decisions to ensure that no one is left behind in responding to and recovering from disasters. The workshop was co-facilitated by the Tonga Meteorological Services, Government of Tonga, UN Women/MIA, and NDRMO.

Disaster Risk Reduction Training for People with Disabilities in Ha'apai



The National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) collaborated with Lavame'a Ta'e'iloa Disabled People Association Incorporation (LATA) to deliver a Disaster Risk Reduction Training Session as part of their two-day Leadership Workshop in Lifuka, Ha'apai. Participants, which included people with disabilities and their caregivers, actively participated in NDRMO's engaging sessions. These sessions featured a presentation on El Nino and Tropical Cyclone 2023/2024 by

Tonga Meteorological Services, Government of Tonga. Additionally, the training covered a gender-inclusive approach to preparedness and responses to natural hazards, along with the identification of evacuation centers by NDRMO. This training served as a valuable platform to strengthen the knowledge of people with disabilities and their caregivers, empowering them to make well-informed decisions in the face of disasters.

Inter-agency Retreat for Tsunami Working Group



On December 5, NDRMO, with Pacific Resilience Program (PREP) Project support, conducted Inter-agency Retreat for Tsunami Technical Working Group to enhance communication and coordination. The retreat includes leadership training, revision of Terms of Reference, and drafting a Tsunami Ready Community Disaster Risk Reduction Roadmap for 2024-2025. NDRMO expresses gratitude to PREP Project for ongoing support in Tonga's Tsunami Preparedness.

Tonga's Delegation Pushes Key Climate Outcomes at COP28



The delegation from Tonga actively participated in COP28, which took place in Expo City, Dubai, UAE, from November 30 to December 12, 2023. Led by His Majesty the King, the Tongan delegation included the Prime Minister, Chief Secretary & Secretary to Cabinet, MEIDECC's CEO, and various government officials, including a representative from the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO). This significant gathering, which brought together leaders, experts, youth, community members, and representatives from NGOs and the private sector, addressed the profound impacts of climate change.

COP28 witnessed a pivotal moment with the agreement to establish the Loss and Damage finance facility, aimed at assisting vulnerable communities in managing immediate climate impacts. This milestone is in alignment with the global objective to finance initiatives in developing nations, promote a sustainable energy transition, and address the substantial emissions gap. Noteworthy was COP28's significant decision, signaling the commencement of the "end" of the fossil fuel era. This decision sets the stage for a swift, just, and equitable transition, supported by substantial emissions reductions and increased financial commitments.

Awareness on DRM Act 2021 KEY FEATURES

The Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Act 2021:

- Clarifies functions of NDRMO, Ministry, governing bodies, and key government entities.
- Establishes various emergency declarations.
- Formalizes the cluster system and defines cluster functions.
- Grants new powers, including evacuation, quarantine, border control, and rationing.
- Enables relief warehouses with rules for equipment management.
- Establishes new regulations for international disaster relief.
- Allows designation of authorized officers within and outside the Ministry.
- Revises financial provisions to link with Emergency Fund Act and provide operational budgets.
- Strengthens offence provisions for robust enforcement.

Highlights of Nov-Dec 2023



23 Nov: NDRMO team delivering IDA training to the district & town officers in Vava'u



8 Nov: A group of gov/non-gov representatives, district & town officers trained on IDA in 'Eua



9 Nov: women participants learning tools in data collection during IDA in Ha'apai



28 Nov: Director NDRMO delivering opening remarks during Critical Infrastructure Stress Testing Workshop



8 Nov: Building Resilience - SPC-NDRMO Training on Disaster Risk Assessment



13 Nov: Moana Kioa delivering remarks during Civil-Military Coordination Workshop



10 Nov: NDRMO Team at Cassie Cohen's Farewell, held at the Australian High Commissioner's Residence



21 Nov: Group photo of the opening of Initial Damage Assessment training in Vava'u



14 Nov: Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Response Workshop conducted by US Defense

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