

Situation Overview

On 19 January, the **Government of Tonga** issued a State of Emergency commencing from 8am on 16 January 2022 to 8am Sunday 13 February 2022.

On 18 January 2022, Tonga issued the **First Official Update Following the Volcanic Eruption**. It announced that Initial Damage Assessments are underway. One of the most urgent priorities is the re-establishment of communication services for international calls and the internet. Domestic phone calls operate only within Tongatapu and 'Eua. To date, there are three confirmed fatalities: one British national; a female from Mango Island; and a male from Nomuka Island. There are also a number of injuries reported. The Government deployed two vessels with health teams and water, food and tents to the Ha'apai group where especially the islands of Mango, Fonoifua and Nomuka have been impacted. All houses were destroyed on Mango island; and only two houses remain on Fonoifua island and also Nomuka island experienced extensive damage. According to the government, evacuation of Mango and Fonoifua islands to Nomuka island is underway. As for destruction in the capital Nuku'alofa, the government announced that 21 houses were completely damaged and 35 severely damaged in parts of the western side of Tongatapu including Kanokupolu. Residents had been evacuated to evacuation centers and were supplied with relief items. In the central district, Kolomotu'a, eight houses were completely damaged and 20 severely. On the island of 'Eua, two houses were completely damaged and 45 severely damaged. Water supplies have been seriously affected by volcanic ash. Government efforts have been made to ensure the continuity of the supply of safe drinking water. Tonga's cluster system has been activated and is compiling reports on needs to be addressed.

Data from surveillance flights showed that up to 100 houses are severely damaged on Tongatapu and 50 on 'Eua. Mango and Niniva Islands are heavily impacted with structures destroyed and trees uprooted. Luckily, these islands are only thinly populated. **New Zealand** carried out another surveillance flight today to capture additional imagery of Tonga as well as Fiji's Lau Group. Images collected will be passed on to Tongan and Fijian officials to assist them with recovery efforts.

The clean-up operation on Fua'amotu International Airport continues and it is hoped that it will be operational by Thursday. Australia and New Zealand have relief flights on stand-by. The airfield in Ha'apai is covered in ash and dust but otherwise does not show damage and should be serviceable. As for ports, it is understood that ships will be able to dock.

GSC Science (NZ) has reported no evidence of ongoing volcanic or tsunami activity in the last 24 hours. However, activity could resume at any time without warning.

Humanitarian Needs and Response

Humanitarian partners on the ground report that the entire population of Tonga (100,209 persons as per 2021 Census) have been impacted by the ash and the *tsunami*; and that about 84,000 persons (84%) have been affected.

According to Tonga's National Emergency Management Office (NEMO), the most pressing needs are access to safe water, the distribution of NFIs, and food assistance.

On the main island Tongatapu (with the capital Nuku'alofa), 90% of the power has been restored and NEMO, the *Tongan Red Cross Society* and other humanitarian partners are responding to the needs by distributing water (some 15,000 litres as of today), food rations and NFI like shelter and kitchen kits. The Tongan Red Cross can assist some 1,200 households (some 6,000 persons) with relief stock in-country.

Water supplies have been seriously affected by the volcanic ash. IDA teams comprising of various representatives from government and non-government departments were deployed immediately to coastal villages in Tongatapu to assess damages to private households and their needs.

Information from the outlying areas is slowly coming in. In the Ha'apai group, the island of Lifuka has a fuel shortage and some 16 houses and also government buildings were severely damaged. In addition, there is a shortage of drinking water. People from Mango and Fonoifua, two of the most impacted islands, are being evacuated by the government to Nomuka. According to the 2021 Census, Mango had 36 residents and Fonoifua 69. The island of 'Eua also reports a shortage of fuel and drinking water. The Government has deployed two vessels with health teams and water, food and tents to the Ha'apai group.

There are limited relief supplies available in the country which are currently deployed. Humanitarian actors together with donors are scaling up relief efforts but there are substantial logistical challenges in-country (by reaching remote and outlying areas with existing assets to assess and subsequently to assist) as well as shipping relief items internationally by air or by sea. Furthermore, the severely damaged communication systems pose yet another serious obstacle to quick assessments and an efficient and adequate humanitarian response. In addition, as Tonga is COVID-free, the country has very strict COVID protocols that need to be adhered to.

There will be a (virtual) [Pacific Humanitarian Team Donor Briefing](#) tomorrow on the response to Tonga (20 January) at 4 pm Fiji time.

Partner Action

Australia has a relief flight on stand-by till the airport in the capital is operational. *HMAS Adelaide* is currently being loaded with relief items and planned to leave for Tonga on 21 January 2022. Shipping time from Australia is estimated at six days.

New Zealand has currently two vessels proceeding to Tonga with relief supplies; they should arrive in the coming days (non-contact deployments due to the pandemic). Flights are on stand-by till the airport in the capital is operational. MFAT has approved release of pre-positioned relief supplies through *Caritas*.

China announced that the *Red Cross Society of China* will provide USD 100,000 in cash as emergency humanitarian assistance. In addition, the Chinese government said it would provide further assistance within its capacity in accordance with Tonga's needs.

Japan said that on 18 January 2022, it received an official request from the Government of Tonga for assistance. It will work closely with Tonga and other countries to decide what to send and means of delivery.

The **European Union's** Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) issued a map on 17 January, 2022, showing the volcanic eruption and the measured tsunami height and tsunami travel time. It can be seen here: [Pacific_Tsunami \(europa.eu\)](#)

The Government of **Fiji** announced it put 50 engineers from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) on stand-by to assist in the relief effort. Should there be a request by the Tongan Government, they can be deployed immediately.