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## Information bulletin Tuvalu/Pacific: Drought

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**Information Bulletin n° 3**  
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**27 October 2011**

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Tuvalu Red Cross with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that extended external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time. The current partners of Tuvalu Red Cross in the Pacific will support as required.

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New Zealand relief delegate setting up the desalination plants in Nukulaelae and training the Tuvalu Red Cross Society volunteers in management and maintenance. Photo Cred: Tuvalu Red Cross Society.

## The situation

The State of Emergency declared on the 28 September might be extended for three to six months, awaiting approval by the Government parliament of Tuvalu.

Tuvalu Government is working closely with its partners to get their desalination plants working and new ones in place as needed. A survey on the government storage capacity has been conducted. This information together with the desalination water production, rainfall, household tank storage, and household numbers will be utilized to inform decision making on the water rationing and the positioning and usage of the water plants. Regional partners are working closely with a Tuvalu representative to address the situation in the country.

### Situation in Funafuti:

- Water rationing on Funafuti commenced on the 29 October via seven distribution points. Each household is allocated two buckets (approximately 40 litres/day) with an additional bucket for babies and the elderly who are bed ridden. This is currently below the sphere standard minimum of 15 litres/day.
- On Funafuti the Public Works Department (PWD) has conducted a household survey of all 789 households to determine the number of people in the household, and also to measure the amount of water in their rain water tanks.
- The Ministry of Health (MoH) commenced "operation safe water" on 12 October which includes household assessment and hygiene promotion activities (including water conservation and key health practices messages aired on radio). The household assessment found that 52 per cent of the population were solely dependent on tank water and those with larger numbers in households were particularly affected.

- Pre-schools have closed but primary and secondary schools remain open on Funafuti.

#### **Situation in outer islands:**

- Water rationing is reported in six outer islands but Red Cross is seeking clarification from the island representatives as some islands have experienced recent rain.
- The Ministry of Health reported that there have been no cases of waterborne disease in the outer islands.
- Nukulaelae Island has been supported by the two emergency desalination plants since early October of New Zealand Red Cross. At this stage Tuvalu Red Cross Society (TRCS) in coordination with partners and their Government are exploring an exit strategy for these plants. (see more details in the section below on Red Cross actions in Nukulaelae).
- A further detailed assessment of Nukulaelae and the most southern island Niulakita will be conducted later on.
- The joint outer-island multi-sectoral assessment (health, water and sanitation, and agriculture) team departed to the northern outer islands on 20 October. It is estimated that this assessment will take approximately three weeks with two to three days' assessment on each island. The assessment team includes three members from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), two RDRT trained Tuvalu Red Cross volunteers, six PWD staff and a Tuvalu agricultural government employee.

## **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

### **Funafuti**

- The TRCS continues to man a water distribution site which has distributed an estimated 18,080 litres of water (benefiting a total of 100 households, approximately 800 people).
- Red Cross has distributed 24 bottles of 500mls and 18 bottles of 240mls hand sanitizer to the hospital on Friday, 21 October for immediate use by hospital staff. Further distributions will be carried out accordingly on a needs basis in coordination with the Ministry of Health.
- One elderly person with special needs has been helped through 13 TRCS volunteers cleaning and replacing tarpaulins on his traditional house (fale), digging a pit latrine and distributing a hygiene kit and blanket.
- A school assessment has been undertaken to three schools by CBHFA officer and community health delegate over two days.
- The three schools are facing a hygiene problem due to lack of water which affects approximately 1,000 children. The TRCS staff and five volunteers have been assisting in providing hand washing stations and 42 bars of soaps, and pumping of water into a tank to facilitate handwashing practices. Verbal information and advice on safe water treatment and storage was also provided to the teachers as requested. Distribution of toilet cleaning equipment was also distributed to all three schools.
- The Red Cross team has attended the daily inter-agency drought coordination meetings chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, who also chairs the National Disaster Committee. The Red Cross has utilized this forum to advocate on key issues such as the lack of water to flush the school toilets. As a result, solutions are being discussed and agreed among partners. SPC water and sanitation specialist accompanied by the IFRC health delegate to Fetuvalu and SDA school identified possible solutions. This was presented back to the committee and the Tuvalu Government are planning to dig wells at the schools next week so that water can be used to flush the toilets.
- Approximately 10 volunteers and the NZRC relief delegate have undertaken maintenance work of the TRCS building including the cleaning and repairing of the rainwater harvesting system, repairing of latrines and other general building maintenance. As a result of the work being completed prior to the rain on Sunday, TRCS's three tanks are now half to three-quarters filled.
- A large shipment of salt water soap/gel is to be distributed to schools on Funafuti to support safe hand washing practice in schools due to the fact that there is little fresh water at present in schools.
- TRCS has prepositioned 150 hygiene kits, three pallets of bottle water, 480 tarpaulins, 425 of 20-litre collapsible jerry cans, 600 of 10-litre jerry cans, and two of 5,000 bladder and tap stands for emergency response in future disaster situations.
- An islet south of Funafuti, Paepaeisle, suffering from water shortage requested support from TRCS. The Public Works department staff and two TRCS volunteers were dispatched on 12 October to assess the situation and distributed 280 litres of water for the two families living there (20 people).

## Nukulaelae

- The two deployed desalination plants continue to function to near capacity (4,000 litres/day). Daily written reports from Nukulaelae have shown that a total of 36,360 litres of water has been produced from 12 – 19 October.
- Rationing of water continues with the amount distributed dependent on the desalination output and current reserves. The distribution is managed by the island disaster committee. The island council is building a reserve on the island.
- The desalination plants are operated by three team leaders and approximately 10 assistants. A New Zealand Red Cross delegate stayed on the island for a week and conducted desalination operational and maintenance training to the operators. There are three volunteers participating in the operation of the plant and one is a team leader. The units are running 24 hours a day with rostered shifts.
- Simple printed operating procedures for desalination plant and maintenance schedules have been developed and translated into local languages for use in both units.
- Due to the lack of resources and hardware on the island, innovative answers have been sourced to fix breakdown such as fixing a brush spring on a water pump with a ballpoint pen.
- There have been no further reported cases of diarrhoea or respiratory illness since the initial outbreak of six cases of diarrhoea.

## Red Cross partners support

- The Funafuti-based NZRC relief delegate continues to provide valuable support to TRCS and his service has been extended until 3 November.
- The other NZRC relief delegate returned from Nukulaelae and departed home to New Zealand on 13 October.
- IFRC community health delegate arrived on 11 October to provide support in the short-term medium-term response planning and is expected to stay until 17 November.
- NZRC has sourced additional 45 boxes of 500 ml bottles of hand sanitizer that will be used for high school and university and health clinics. NZRC has also been responsible for the provision of disaster relief preposition stock mentioned above.
- Australian Red Cross (ARC) has provided a hygiene promotion box which will be utilized for volunteer, community and school activities over the next few months. ARC also provided TRCS the 150 hygiene kits mentioned above.
- IFRC regional office is assisting TRCS in mobilizing emergency items, information sharing and coordination among partners.
- Partners are currently waiting for the completion of the three to six months of an activity plan.

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## Contact information

**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

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1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
  2. Enable healthy and safe living.
  3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
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