

Tonga: Tsunami situation report 4

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

Date: 22 Oct 2009

GENERAL INFORMATION

Almost a month after three six-meter tsunamis struck the island of Niuaotupapu in northern Tonga, the government continues to head efforts towards early recovery and reconstruction.

HEALTH IMPACT

The hospital at Niuaotupapu was completely destroyed and has yet to be rebuilt. A temporary medical station has been set up at a Latter-Day Saints (LDS) church hall.

Water systems on Niuaotupapu have been restored.

Identified priority health needs are:

- Refurbishment of the hospital at Niuaotupapu, including the replacement of hospital supplies and equipment lost to the waves
- Long term solution of rebuilding the hospital at a safer location
- Continuous, properly monitored clean water supply
- Proper sanitation facilities for people still living in temporary shelter
- Addressing the specific water and sanitary needs of women
- Vaccine and cold chain capability to be in place in case of infectious disease outbreaks
- Oral Rehydration Salts in case of outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases
- Psychosocial support

Casualties

Dead: 9

Injured: 7

Displaced: 500

Affected: 335 families

All persons injured by the tsunami have since recovered.

RESPONSE

Government Response

On 16 October, the government of Tonga officially announced the initiation of the early recovery phase. However, it continues to coordinate humanitarian and relief activities even as it chairs meetings to draft plans for reconstruction.

MOH Response

The Ministry of Health (MOH) heads the Thematic Working Group (TWG) for health, coordinating with the World Health Organization (WHO), international partners, and other United Nations (UN) agencies.

The overall health strategy centres on two phases. The first phase is directed towards maintaining the health of the displaced population and preventing outbreaks of communicable diseases. The second phase is more long-term, aiming to build and equip a new and more damage-resistant hospital in a safer location.

International Response

Concerned countries and international partners are in active coordination with the Tongan government in drafting the plans for early recovery, including the areas of health, water, sanitation, and hygiene.

WHO Response

The WHO Regional Office has obtained a grant for financial aid from the Italian government.

Dr Janos Annus, WHO Acting Country Liaison Officer (CLO), arrived in Tonga on 7 October 2009 and has been coordinating with the government and MOH for information sharing and provision of needs.

The WHO continues to provide hygiene kits and vector control materials for the survivors of the tsunami and weekly food rations for the local health staff. The WHO has procured a vehicle for the use of the MOH.

Sources

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Letter on Health Needs for Niuatoputapu, 13 Oct 2009

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