



For immediate release
Friday October 2, 2009

Samoa Tsunami: People staying away from devastated villages

Oxfam helping shocked survivors

International agency Oxfam's emergency team is at work in Samoa today responding to urgent needs. The immediate focus is to ensure survivors in remote rural areas have clean water and basic sanitation.

Without coordinated action the public health situation is at risk of deteriorating if people become dehydrated and sickness spreads through an already traumatised population.

Oxfam has worked for the past eight years alongside its Samoan partner organisation, Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI), who operate in 150 rural villages across Samoa, supporting a range of community-based projects aimed at alleviating poverty, creating sustainable village economies and revitalising the agricultural sector.

"People are staying away from devastated villages today. They're still in shock and a lot are not ready to start again," said Oxfam aid worker Janna Hamilton. "Many survivors are wearing face masks due to the strong smell of dead fish and washed up vegetation lying all over the roads and in the remnants of houses," she added.

"Right now we are concerned for the urgent health needs," said Janna. "But we are committed to the long-haul. We will be helping rebuild their homes and livelihoods, and ensuring communities become more resilient to future disasters."

"One man told me he lost his shop, his home and he can't get to his taro farm anymore. He can no longer support his family," said Janna. "Once the immediate danger has passed, we need to help these people get back on their feet."

This disaster is one of the largest Samoa has ever experienced. Oxfam is calling on the public to respond generously to their appeals for funds, and is hoping to raise NZ\$250,000. The total donations currently stand at NZ\$77,000.

Oxfam volunteers are on the street starting today with collection buckets to support the Samoa Tsunami Appeal. Donations can be made to appeal on www.oxfam.org.nz; by calling 0800 600 700; or to make an automatic \$20 donation, call or 0900 600 20. Donations can also be made at The Body Shop, Levis and Baby Factory stores nationwide.

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Editors Notes:

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Please note time zones:

00:00:00 GMT

converts to:

13:00:00 Samoa (Western and American)

13:00:00 Auckland, New Zealand

10:00:00 Melbourne, Australia

17:00:00 Canada and US/Pacific

20:00:00 US / Eastern

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