



For immediate release
Sunday October 4, 2009

Oxfam ramps up response in Samoa

After rushing in a relief team to help deliver the most basic emergency supplies – drinking water, shoes, clothes, Fala Lili (mats), sleeping bags and boxes of tinned fish – international agency Oxfam is ramping up its response in Samoa. Oxfam currently has five staff on the ground and the organisation is co-leading the priority issues of water and sanitation (WASH) for the coordinated international operation.

On Tuesday (NZ-time) Samoan authorities and all other organisations on the ground will do a coordinated rapid assessment exercise across all affected areas. More expertise will join Oxfam's team in Samoa following the assessment, with a short-term focus on the provision of clean water, construction or repair of latrines, delivery of hygiene kits and kitchen sets, and public health awareness.

In addition, Oxfam will continue supporting its Samoan partner organisation Women in Business Development (WIBDI), who are part of the livelihood early recovery effort being lead by the United Nations Development Program.

WIBDI staff member Fuimaono Rosa Tipasa's family owned the Taufua beach fale. She helped bury 14 members of her family the day following the tsunami.

"The family half-built a new home one kilometre from the coast. Rose's 98-year old uncle, who died in the tsunami, had wanted to move the family to higher ground eventually. They were too late," said Oxfam aid worker Janna Hamilton.

Fuimaono Rosa Tipasa is a high chief who came to Auckland in March to represent WIBDI at the Pasifika Festival. She shared her experience of reviving the almost-lost art of fine mat weaving with the audience at the festival's Samoa village.

"It was heartbreaking to now hear Rosa's tragic story of loss. Once the initial urgent needs have been met, it is clear that her community and many others will require long-term support to rebuild their homes and livelihoods. And that's exactly what Oxfam is here to do," Janna added.

Oxfam is also monitoring the recovery effort in Tonga. The Red Cross at this point, has not sought further assistance from other aid agencies.

In New Zealand, Oxfam staff have worked non-stop through the weekend, coordinating with aid workers on the ground organising volunteers on the streets and at the phones to collect donations. So far, the organisation has raised over \$140K for its Samoa Tsunami Appeal. \$10,000 of that money has already been sent for the recovery.

Sunday (Monday New Zealand) is a day of mourning in Samoa, which all agencies on the ground will respect.

"Samoa and Tonga both have a special place in the hearts and minds of New

Zealanders. It's encouraging to hear about all of the donations so far," said Janna. "Everyone here is extremely grateful for the generosity. But we still have a long way to go," she added.

Oxfam volunteers are on the street with collection buckets to support the Samoa Tsunami Appeal. Donations can be made to the appeal on www.oxfam.org.nz; by calling 0800 400 666; or to make an automatic \$20 donation, call 0900 600 20. Donations can also be made at The Body Shop, Levis and Baby Factory stores nationwide.

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Editors Notes:

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Jason Garman, jason@oxfam.org.nz, mob +64 (0)21 202 5096 or Prue Smith, prue@oxfam.org.nz, 021 140 0825.

Photographer Jane Ussher is in Samoa, and has donated her time and efforts to Oxfam. We have already received several of her photos (hi-res), available for use and to be credited: Photograph by Jane Ussher/Oxfam. To use these photos, contact Jason Garman.

Please note time zones:

00:00:00 GMT	Fri Oct 02
converts to:	
13:00:00 Samoa (Western and American)	Thurs Oct 01
13:00:00 Auckland, New Zealand	Friday Oct 02
10:00:00 Melbourne, Australia	Friday Oct 02
17:00:00 Canada and US/Pacific	Thurs Oct 01
20:00:00 US / Eastern	Thurs Oct 01