

For immediate release
Friday October 9, 2009

Tsunami: Relief is only the first step on the road to building back better

Just over a week after tsunami waves scoured the southern coast of Samoa, killing one per cent of the population and seriously affecting one out of every six people, the relief effort is still urgent. International agency Oxfam is stressing that recovery is not just about immediate relief – it is about longer-term development.

There are survivors who do not yet have clean drinking water and the threat of disease still hangs over the islands. Women and children are particularly at risk. Oxfam yesterday air freighted two large water bladders to Samoa and continues to access isolated family groups who have taken refuge in the hills, delivering emergency drinking water, sleeping bags and food.

Yesterday Oxfam was allocated NZ\$150,000 from the New Zealand government's Humanitarian Action Fund to support its Samoan recovery work over the next six months. Combined with public donations, ongoing fundraising and offers of support from Canada and Germany, the agency is planning for up to a NZ\$1 million project.

"It's wonderful to hear how generous the public has been. I hope donations continue to come in, because helping these people rebuild their lives will take a big effort. When this disaster fades from the media spotlight, the hard work really begins," said Oxfam aid worker Janna Hamilton speaking from Apia.

Tinned fish, bottled water and mats are necessary to get survivors through the immediate aftermath, but a successful recovery requires a long-term commitment. Oxfam has a 12-24 month rehabilitation plan and is working with local communities and groups.

Throughout the response, Oxfam will support our local partner organisation, Women in Business Development (WIBDI), in helping people to regain their livelihoods. Seeds have already been planted and seedlings will be distributed to WIBDI's network of organic farmers, along with tools, to replace crops lost in the tsunami and rebuild successful markets delivering organic banana, taro and coconut oil.

In the next six months, Oxfam will also work with the Samoan Water Authority and Department of Health to secure sanitation and safe water supplies for the communities of Saleapaga, Siumu and Manono Island.

"People here are still in shock. To top it off, yesterday's earthquake near Vanuatu triggered another tsunami warning across the Pacific," said Hamilton. "We should do everything we can for the families I saw today running for higher ground, to help them become more resilient to future disasters. This is a chance to build back better."

Donations can be made to Oxfam's Samoa Tsunami Appeal on www.oxfam.org.nz; by calling 0800 400 666; or to make an automatic \$20 donation, call 0900 600 20. The Body Shop, Levis, Baby Factory, Flight Centre and Telecom stores nationwide are accepting donations. And Christchurch's Southern Amp Festival is an official benefit concert to support the appeal.

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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, +64 (0)21 140 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, please contact Jason Garman or visit:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/oxfamnewzealand/sets/72157622517523836/>

Please note time zones:

00:00:00 GMT	Fri Oct 09
converts to:	
13:00:00 Samoa (Western and American)	Thurs Oct 08
13:00:00 Auckland, New Zealand	Friday Oct 09
10:00:00 Melbourne, Australia	Friday Oct 09
17:00:00 Canada and US/Pacific	Thurs Oct 08
20:00:00 US / Eastern	Thurs Oct 08

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Samoa Tsunami Appeal
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