

## **Samoa: threat of disease grows as Caritas continues to deliver aid**

**Source:** Caritas Australia

**Date:** 03 Oct 2009

"When you see flatbed trucks coming into the town with dead bodies on the back... I mean I've seen this on television before in different parts of the world, but I never expected to see it here in my lifetime in Samoa", says Peter Bendinelli, Chair of Caritas Samoa.

Caritas Samoa estimates it will need US\$100,000 immediately to provide ongoing relief following the recent tsunami which battered parts of the archipelago.

Over 150 people are reported dead as a result of tsunami waves that hammered the South Pacific islands, and destroyed buildings and infrastructure earlier this week.

"There are obviously bodies that haven't been found.... The first thing is to make sure that all the bodies have been found. There are still quite a few missing unfortunately and that's very hard for people", said Mr Bendinelli.

"It's well over 30 degrees every day and things decay very, very quickly so you have to bury the dead as quickly as possible", said Mr Bendinelli as plans for a mass burial were investigated.

"Water is the main problem there. Without water no one can work very long in this heat and the sun," says Peter Bendinelli, who is coordinating relief efforts for Caritas Samoa.

Caritas is buying large quantities of water and trucking them to the areas in need. Caritas was on the scene assessing the situation within hours of the disaster striking. It has been assisting taking people to church accommodation and to the hospital.

Caritas plans to provide tsunami survivors with temporary housing, water tanks, gas cylinders and help to reconnect to the electricity supply.

Jack de Groot reemphasised the call for community support for the people of Samoa and across the Asia-Pacific region for support, "Aid agencies are massively over stretched at present but we are having a real impact in saving lives as the threat of disease mounts.

"We need more support from the Australian people to ensure we can have a lasting impact on rebuilding these shattered communities for a long time.

You can support the Caritas Australia Communities in Crisis – Asia Pacific Appeal by calling 1800 024 413 or online.

**For more information** call Evan Ellis 0408 869 833