

**Bangkok**

14 February 2018

SITUATION

During the night of Monday the 12 February 2018, the capital of Nuku'alofa in Tonga, was hit by Category 4 Tropical Cyclone Gita passing directly over the main island, with strong wind speeds of 230 km/hour and wind gusts of 278 km/hour devastating the country's most populated island group. Tongatapu, which includes Tongatapu island (home of the capital), as well as 'Eua island to the southeast, were battered by the worst cyclone to hit Tonga in 60 years. TC Gita had damaged parts of neighbour Samoa before entering Tonga, where its ongoing destructive effects include heavy rain, widespread flooding, risk of disease and mass displacement. Parliament House was totally destroyed by TC Gita. Debris, uprooted trees, and no electricity or fuel means many outlying areas and islands have not had contact made, or undergone preliminary rapid assessments. Although there have been no reported deaths, many communities remain unaccounted for at time of publication of this alert.

NEEDS

The cyclone has put the region in a state of crisis. The cyclone affected persons find themselves in a desperate situation, with many unmet vital humanitarian needs such as access to: mosquito nets to prevent further spread of dengue fever, an outbreak of which is currently being experienced in the capital. Primary needs include: sufficient food, safe shelter and basic non-food items, basic health services and facilities, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, livelihood activities, protection activities, and adequate nutrition.

The dire situation is further compounded for the cyclone affected people with vulnerabilities; (optional) more specifically for people living with disabilities who have been restricted in their ability to prepare or repair their homes, or safely reach evacuation centres in time. Pregnant and lactating women are also at higher risk of the impact of contracting dengue fever, an outbreak of which was declared last week in the capital, Nuku'alofa. Dengue fever, when untreated, can be fatal. There is a pressing necessity to provide immediate assistance to minimize loss of life and to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are covered first.

STAKEHOLDERS

The following national and international entities are present and doing their best to respond to the crisis: Government of Tonga, UN OCHA, Act for Peace; CAN DO; CARE; Oxfam, Tonga Red Cross Society, His Majesty's Armed Forces (Tonga), Australian Defence Force, New Zealand Defence Force , Various churches in Tonga, Tonga National Council of Churches, Caritas Tonga, and The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADR)

The emergency response is currently being coordinated by the National Emergency Management Office. To ensure that the humanitarian response is well coordinated and complementary, the ACT forum will take part in meetings with all relevant sector stakeholders (together with local partners) and establish an open line of communication with crisis affected persons and communities to ensure a humanitarian response based on participation and feedback.

ACT Alliance

ACT Alliance is currently monitoring the situation and is preparing a rapid needs assessment to have an in-depth context analysis and better understanding of existing vulnerabilities. ACT Alliance is now monitoring the situation and emergency teams are ready/preparing to respond according to the results of a contextual analysis and rapid needs assessment. ACT Alliance is ready to respond, providing funds to local partner organisations in the coming hours. Furthermore, ACT Alliance will engage in advocacy on the national and international level to ensure that the voices of those affected by the cyclone are amplified.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel (Line.Hempel@actalliance.org)

For further information please contact:

Forum Coordinator, Geoff Robinson (Senior Program Manager, Act for Peace, grobinson@actforpeace.org.au)

ACT Regional Programme Officer, James Munpa (James.Munpa@actalliance.org)

ACT Web Site address: <http://www.actalliance.org>