

This report was issued by OCHA Fiji and the OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES

- **Cook Islands were hit by Tropical Cyclone Pat in the early hours of 10 February (Cook Islands time), and Aitutaki island in the Southern Cook was seriously damaged**
- **New Zealand Defense Force (NZDF) flight C-130 delivered the most urgent relief items twice a day on 15th and 16th February, and the majority of needed items have arrived in Aitutaki by this flight and other transport by today while food, kitchen sets and other non-food items still needs to be delivered**
- **The worst hit area was the village of Nikaupara and Tautu, with 79% and 86% respectively of buildings severely damaged.**
- **Red Cross report suggests that 88 houses were classified as Category 4(76%-100% damaged) while Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning reports that 34 buildings have been totally demolished in 8 villages**

II. Situation Overview

Tropical Cyclone Pat, Category 3, hit the Southern Cook Islands in the early hours of 10 February (Cook Islands time), and Aitutaki island was seriously hit, with major infrastructural damage, although the airport, wharf and hospital only sustained minimal damage. At its height Tropical Cyclone Pat was classified as a category 3 cyclone bringing destructive wind gusts of over 100 knots. Up to this moment no particular information of damages was received from other Southern Cook Islands.

On 10 February (Cook Islands time), the Prime Minister declared a State of Disaster for Aitutaki Island (population 1,671, 580 households). An Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) on the island was immediately activated and an assessment team composed of government and Red Cross staff was dispatched to the island on the same day.

New Zealand received a formal request for assistance from Cook Islands on 14 February. The United Nations also received an official request for support from the Cook Islands Government on 12 February.

A rapid assessment by Red Cross, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning (MOIP) has been completed. The Ministry of Agriculture is currently conducting an in depth agricultural assessment and the Department of Social Welfare will also start identifying vulnerable groups who need special support through the government social welfare schemes.

While MOIP reports that 34 buildings have been demolished in 8 villages, the Red Cross report suggests that 88 houses were classified as Category 4 (76%-100% damaged), which means "completely demolished". The Red Cross assessment covered 1,498 of the population (male 541, female 531, children of one to 15 years old-377 and infant below one year old-54) and 408 houses in 8 villages, which are affected in one way or another. At the time of the assessment (11th and 12th February), 70 families were staying at public facilities used as evacuation centers, 110 families were staying with relatives while 210 families remained at their houses.

The worst hit area, according to the MOIP report, was the village of Nikaupara and Tautu, with 79% and 86% respectively of buildings severely damaged.

Key needs including access to drinking water, emergency shelter, food and the restoration of electricity have been addressed and it is assumed that the most critical emergency needs are beginning to be met with the relief items delivered to the island by C-130 and other means. These include a water treatment plant provided by the Australian Red Cross which is now operational in Aitutaki to provide drinking water, and family tents for displaced families as an emergency shelter. Food funded by ADRA will be distributed by Cook Islands Red

Cross, initially targeting those displaced whose houses have been severely damaged as they are considered to be one of the most vulnerable groups. Electricians have been mobilized to accelerate the restoration of electricity especially to the individual houses.

A C-130 (New Zealand Defense Force flight) carried various relief items such as family tents, generators, water containers, tarpaulins and chainsaw packs twice a day on both 15th and 16th February. They also provided New Zealand Defense Force personnel with technical expertise such as electricians, engineers and plumbers, who are currently helping the community to set up the tents and are providing other support.

Tropical Cyclone Pat response related information is available on Pacific Disaster Net (PDN) and can be accessed with the Pacific Disaster Net (<http://www.pacificdisaster.net/>). To find the relevant documents please use the search (top right) and enter **pat** as search term.

III. Humanitarian Needs and Response

Initial Assessment

- At this stage, four assessment reports have been finalized and shared publicly including the Red Cross assessment, Ministry of Health assessment, Ministry of Education assessment and Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning assessment which centres on infrastructure damage.
- The Ministry of Agriculture is currently conducting in depth agricultural assessment.
- The Department of Social Welfare under Ministry of Internal Affairs is dispatching a staff to identify the most vulnerable who can be supported under the government social welfare schemes.
- The Red Cross assessment covered 1,498 population (male 541, female 531, children of one to 15 years old-377 and infant below one year old-54) and 408 houses in 8 villages, which are affected in one way another.
- At the time of assessment during 11th-12th February, 70 families were staying at public facilities used as evacuation centers, 110 families were staying with the relatives while 210 families remained at their own house. A specific assessment targeting evacuation centers is required if evacuees currently remain in these facilities.
- The Red Cross reports that approximately 78% of homes in these areas were affected. Food, water and shelter represent the three highest priority areas for assistance. Sanitation and drinking water and health assistance will also be needed.
- The key findings of this assessment are included below.

Debris/Waste management

- Disposing of roofing iron remains as a priority. The Cook Islands are still in the cyclone season and it will be very hazardous if another cyclone hits the island before this debris is properly disposed of.
- In order for the community to conduct cleaning up, four chainsaws are available at EOC and to be returned at the end of the day.
- Heavy machinery including two bob cats have arrived with C-130 for clearance of debris
- All roads already cleared.
- Big trucks to dump the rubbish and the crusher are needed, and the availability of such equipment needs to be checked with Rarotonga.

Logistics

- The New Zealand Defense Force (NZDF) C-130 Hercules had two flights a day on 15th and 16th February delivering most urgent relief goods and equipment. It departed Rarotonga on 17th morning, returning to New Zealand, as no further urgent tasks are required.
- 80% of main grid electricity has been restored, but only 10% of individual homes are reconnected to electricity due to safety verification.

- 9 electricians have been mobilized from other parts of the Cook Islands and 4 more electricians will be mobilized to accelerate the restoration of electricity to the individual houses.
- The NZDF deployed a 12 member team with C-130, and their current main focus is on installation of family tents. They are also working on the plan of basic repair to get the schools operational.

Education

- Ministry of Education (MOE) is sending a team to Aitutaki to conduct in depth assessment which will cover immediate, medium and long term needs.
- It is essential to start schools as soon as possible to bring normal and routine life to the children.
- WASH facilities at schools are being assessed by the education team on the island.
- The government requested UNICEF to provide the support in education sector.
- NZAID expressed their interest to provide support in rehabilitation of schools.
- The school grounds still requires clean up of the debris and NZDF team will provide support in this.
- Ministry of Education is aiming at starting schools on next Monday.
- A counselor from MOE is currently in Aitutaki to provide psychosocial counseling to the affected children and teachers.

Emergency Shelter/Non Food Items (NFIs)

Assessment information

- The Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning (MOIP) assessment reports that 57% of buildings on the islands including domestic houses, touristic facilities and public and commercial facilities have been damaged (397 buildings out of 762 total buildings). The majority of the damage was caused to domestic houses with 73% of total houses damaged.
- The worst hit area was the village of Nikaupara and Tautu, with 79% and 86% respectively of buildings severely damaged including 6 houses in each village totally destroyed. In the village of Amuri, 40% of the buildings were damaged including 12 building totally destroyed.
- According to the MOIP, the total replacement cost to rehabilitate the damaged buildings is estimated as NZ\$12 million, among which NZ\$4.5 for rehabilitation of domestic houses.
- While MOIP reports that 34 buildings have been demolished in total in 8 villages, the Red Cross report suggests that 88 houses were classified as Category 4(76%-100% damaged), which means “completely demolished”.
- MOIP reports that besides 34 buildings totally demolished, 167 buildings had their roof demolished, and 187 buildings had the roof damaged among total 762 buildings they have assessed.
- MOIP report suggests that the electrical elements and wiring of all buildings whether damaged or undamaged need to be thoroughly checked before connecting to mains electricity to avoid potential risks.
- The Red Cross report says that among 408 household assessed, 73 had no to very minor damage, 41 houses had minor damages, 67 houses had some minor and some major damages (26%-50% damages) and 105 houses had major extensive damages besides 88 houses completely demolished. In addition, 34 detached buildings from the main dwellings have been demolished. In total, around 76% of houses assessed were either demolished or damaged.

Action taken

- Family tents provided by the New Zealand Government are being erected with assistance from the Red Cross and NZDF for those whose homes have been destroyed. The tent set up has started at the villages of Vaipai and Tautu, and will continue in other villages.

- New Zealand High Commission representatives are assessing whether there is a shortfall in family tents. There are more available in New Zealand should they be required.
- Red Cross has distributed 200 tarpaulins already and another 230 are being distributed today. 200 shelter kits have also arrived in Aitutaki and are being distributed.
- Red Cross kitchen sets, family kits and other items need to be delivered to Aitutaki as soon as possible.

Food and Nutrition

- Food funded by ADRA will be distributed by Cook Islands Red Cross, initially targeting those displaced and whose houses have been severely damaged as they are considered to be amongst the most vulnerable, but also reaching out to other affected population.
- The Red Cross assessment says that where housing damages are particularly bad, household kitchens and cooking areas have been badly affected as well. There are serious implications for the ability to cook.
- The same assessment reports that a total of 91 families out of 317 household surveyed request immediate supply of cooking sets. A total of 156 people requests food items such as high energy biscuit as part of the nutritional needs for children, rice due to lack of root crops, bread fruits and bread from the local bakery.

Health

- 3 health officers have been deployed to Aitutaki for vector control by spraying insecticide and monitoring health situation of the affected population.
- At this moment there is no serious health concern or the outbreak of diseases reported to the Ministry of Health.
- Asbestos is considered to be an issue to be addressed and Ministry of Health (MOH) will take the lead. MOH staff on Aitutaki will report back on the situation and the risks caused by Asbestos. Community awareness raising will be required.
- The Red Cross assessment suggests that the need for medical assistance are for those who are diabetic, asthmatic etc. and are under prescribed medication. There were families requesting basic drugs like panadol, band-aid etc.

Protection

- The Red Cross will visit the most vulnerable groups to identify their specific needs such as disabled, impoverished families, lactating mother and elderly.
- Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Internal Affairs has 2 officers on the ground and one additional staff will be deployed from Rarotonga tomorrow. The main focus of their activities initially will be the identification of the most vulnerable and possible support under the government social welfare schemes.
- Assessment of evacuation centre situation is urgently needed if the evacuees still remain in the public facilities.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

- Water provision by piped water system is being restored to about 90% of the island presently although this water is considered not suitable for drinking and mainly for washing and cleaning purposes.
- The Red Cross water treatment plant and other equipment has arrived in Aitutaki yesterday and became operational. It is pumping treated drinkable water. It can handle approximately 5,000ltrs per hour which can meet the needs of drinking water on the island. It can be collected with water

containers at the pumping location. Trucks are still needs to be assigned to deliver drinking water to the villages.

- EOC advises the MOH to conduct weekly water testing to monitor the quality of water.
- Red Cross assessment reports that most affected households have either lost or damaged water tank, which was the only source of drinking water, which need to be replaced while emergency drinking water distribution is on going with Red Cross water treatment plant.

Early Recovery

- Red Cross reports that livelihood most affected includes fishing, farmers and small traders. Main agricultural farming areas have been destroyed. Significant support will be needed to help agricultural livelihood.
- The impact by the livelisock loss was considered minimal, but it still needs to be further confirmed.
- A recovery team lead by a UNDP recovery advisor will be deployed to Cook Islands in supporting the government in recovery assessment and the formulation of a plan with the possible focus on livelihood, agriculture, shelter, food security, environment/hazards, environmental health and protection.
- Ministry of Agriculture reported that there are 6 staff already on ground and 9 more will be mobilized. Agricultural assessment results will be available shortly.

IV. Coordination

- The Mayor and community leaders have been meeting regularly to discuss the needs of the community and recovery plan.
- A daily coordination meeting among key stakeholder is ongoing in Aitutaki. It is held daily at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the time to be confirmed with EOC as it changes on daily basis. The organizations/agencies involved in the relief operation are welcomed and expected to attend this coordination meeting.
- An emergency response steering committee meeting, chaired by Minister Rasmussen, is ongoing in Rarotonga daily at 09:00 am.
- A community focal point in Auckland for fundraising and coordination efforts has been identified. This focal point will works closely with the Aitutaki community executive in Rarotonga to coordinate offers of assistance and proposed fund-raising efforts.
- There are 45 volunteers now on the island and the coordination of volunteers needs to be strengthened.
- UNDAC team is providing a coordination support to the Emergency Management Cook Islands (EMCI) both at Aitutaki and Rarotonga.

V. Funding

- NZAID has allocated NZ\$200,000 for relief and recovery efforts. Some of the funding will be channelled through the NZ Red Cross
- Pacific islands Forum Secretariat pledged Fiji\$20,000
- WHO has contributed US\$5,000 for Cook Islands MOH for health activities in responding TC Pat.
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies(IFRC) has contributed 150,000 Swiss Franc to procure and deliver the shelter materials to Aitutaki

All humanitarian partners including donors and recipient agencies are encouraged to inform FTS of cash and in-kind contributions by sending an email to: fts@reliefweb.int

VI. Contact

UNDAC/OCHA Cook Islands: Ms. Minako Kakuma, Humanitarian Affairs Officer
Email: Kakuma@un.org, Minako_ocha@undp.org Mob: +682-79159 or +679-9991689

OCHA Pacific: Mr. Peter Muller, Regional Disaster Response Adviser

Email: peter.muller@undp.org Tel: +679-331 6761, Mobile: +679 999 1664

OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific: Ms. Yindee Lertcharoenchok, Humanitarian Affairs Analyst (Disaster Response), Email: lertcharoenchok@un.org Tel: +66 (0) 2288 2437

OCHA New York: Ms. Akiko Yoshida, Associate Humanitarian Affairs Officer
Email: yoshidaa@un.org Tel: +1 212 963 1149