

*This report was issued by OCHA Fiji and the OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
This is the last situation report in this series.*

I. HIGHLIGHTS/KEY PRIORITIES

- **The Cook Islands were hit by Tropical Cyclone Pat in the early hours of 10 February (Cook Islands time), and Aitutaki Island in the Southern Cooks was severely damaged.**
- **While the emergency operation such as the restoration of electricity and the distribution of food and non-food items are on-going, the government is ready to move into an early recovery phase.**
- **The Early Recovery core team was established under the Minister of Finance.**

II. Situation Overview

Tropical Cyclone Pat, Category 3, hit the Southern Cook Islands in the early hours of 10 February (Cook Islands time). Aitutaki Island bore the brunt of the storm's impact, which caused major infrastructural damage. However, the airport, wharf and hospital only sustained minimal damage. At its peak, Tropical Cyclone Pat was classified as a category 3 cyclone bringing destructive wind gusts of over 100 knots. Other Islands experienced minimal limited damage not requiring other than local assistance.

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.

The emergency activities including the drinking water distribution, restoration of electricity and piped water, temporary repair of the hospital and schools, distribution of emergency shelter materials, food and other non-food items and the waste management have been effectively implemented, and the key emergency needs are assumed to be met while the distribution of relief items including the family tents and tarpaulins are on-going. Both the Aitutaki EOC and the government coordination team in Rarotonga emphasized the need to swiftly move into the recovery phase to address the middle and long term needs of the affected population.

On 22 February, the Early Recovery core team was established under the Minister of Finance who is the recovery coordinator and the team will directly report to the Minister. This team includes the office of Prime Minister, the aid management division under the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, UNDP and EMCI (Emergency Management Cook Islands).

The early recovery assessment will be conducted in this week by addressing the specific recovery areas for which the team still requires further information such as livelihood and disaster risk reduction. The housing will be one of the key components of the recovery plan and the community consultation on the shelter options will be held during their assessment. The core team aims to develop a recovery plan by the end of the next week. In depth sectoral assessments such as infrastructure damage assessment, environmental assessment as well as agriculture assessment are on-going, and results will be reflected in the recovery plan.

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 relevant documents please use the search (top right) and enter **pat** as the search term.

III. Humanitarian Needs and Response

Initial Assessment

- The Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning (MOIP) is conducting an in depth infrastructure damage assessment, which will provide an accurate figure on infrastructure damage caused to domestic houses and other facilities.
- ADRA conducted a rapid assessment in Aitutaki to identify the areas where further support could be provided, in addition to contributions of food items that will be distributed through the Cook Islands Red Cross. ADRA may provide additional family tents that were identified as a gap.
- Habitat for Humanity New Zealand is dispatching a team to the Cook Islands to assess areas that require further support.

Debris/Waste management

- The collection of debris, especially roofing iron and the asbestos, remains a priority. Although a tropical depression 11F has weakened and may not pose a serious threat to Aitutaki, it is the tropical cyclone season for the Cook Islands and waste management needs to be urgently addressed. In the national coordination meeting on 23 February, it was agreed that roofing iron would be temporarily buried pending a longer term solution.

Logistics

- The vessel *Pacific Phoenix* arrived in Aitutaki carrying food and non-food relief items, building materials, a bobcat, a truck and supplies for local shops.

Education

- The schools were scheduled to start today, but due to the approach of Tropical Depression 11F the re opening of schools has been postponed in case these schools need to be used as evacuation centres. Classes are now scheduled to re-start on Tuesday and Wednesday this week.
- The New Zealand Defence Force conducted temporary repairs to the Araura Primary School, Araura College and Vaitau Primary School.
- ADRA is considering providing support in the rehabilitation of the SDA primary school.
- Ten School in a Box and seven recreation kits provided by UNICEF arrived in Rarotonga and will be delivered to Aitutaki today (22 February) for distribution to the schools tomorrow.

Emergency Shelter/Non Food Items (NFIs)

- The Red Cross has been distributing tarpaulins and tents, and as of today, they have distributed over 600 tarpaulins and over 40 family tents.
- There is an urgent need of extra 30-40 family tents. ADRA have stated that they will be able to provide additional tents if required. They will further discuss with NZAID.
- Transitional or permanent houses will be the one of key elements of a recovery plan. There are several non government organizations which show interest in supporting the building of the permanent houses. The government's guiding policy on the re-building of domestic houses is urgently needed to harmonize shelter activities by the different actors and all actors involved in the shelter activities need to work in a coordinated manner under the government recovery plan.

Food and Nutrition

- The Early Recovery core team will analyze the food security issue based on the result of on-going agricultural assessment.
- The Red Cross will implement a school feeding programme to encourage children to return to schools and supplement their nutritional needs and the ADRA will provide a material (food) support.

Health

- Disposal of asbestos is ongoing.
- Vector control by spraying was completed.
- A public Health team is conducting awareness raising in the community on vector born diseases and hygiene, including the distribution of Information, Education, Communication (IEC) materials.

- The estimated costs according to CIIC (Cook Islands Investment Corporation) and the Ministry of Health for the rehabilitation of the hospital is around \$300,000.

Protection

- A community consultation during the early recovery assessment will include focus group discussions with different interest groups within the community in order to make the recovery plan more gender sensitive.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

- The Red Cross has pumped and filtered over 20,000 litres of water since the water treatment unit began operations. One truck is functioning to deliver the water to the villages. Another truck was brought to the island on the vessel *Pacific Phoenix*, which will strengthen water delivery capacity and increase accessibility to drinking water.
- The recovery plan needs to include medium to long term WASH issues, especially a sustainable solution for access to drinking water by the rehabilitation of rain water catchment systems including the replacement of water tanks, which used to be one of the sources of drinking water.

Early Recovery

- The Early Recovery core team was established under the Minister of Finance, who is the recovery coordinator. This team includes the office of Prime Minister, the aid management division under the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, UNDP and EMCI (Emergency Management Cook Islands) and reports directly to the Minister of Finance. The core team will work in collaboration with technical line ministries and non-government actors.
- The early recovery assessment will be conducted this week to assess the specific recovery areas for which the team requires further information, such as livelihoods and disaster risk reduction. Housing will be one of the key components of the recovery plan and community consultations on the shelter options will be held during the assessment.
- The core team aims to develop a plan by the end of next week, which will be submitted to the Cabinet.

IV. Coordination

- A daily coordination meeting among key stakeholders is ongoing in Aitutaki. This is held at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at a time confirmed by the EOC – the flexible timing is due to various other EOC commitments. The organizations/agencies involved in the relief operation are welcome and are expected to attend this coordination meeting.
- An emergency response steering committee meeting, chaired by Minister Rasmussen, was held in Rarotonga. The next meeting will be held on 24 February at 09:00am.
- The Early Recovery core team will play a coordinating role in the recovery phase.
- The UNDAC team will depart on 24 February, following a debrief with government counterparts and handing over the coordination support role to the UNDP Recovery Advisor.

V. Funding

- Government of New Zealand approved extending initial support by NZ\$100,000 to cover work on the schools and hospitals.
- Funding contributions available on the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) fts@reliefweb.int

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

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