



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT  
MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT  
P.O. BOX G8  
HONIARA  
SOLOMON ISLANDS

TELEPHONE: (677) 28605/25641

28705

FACSIMILE: (677

---

## PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 17 August  
1.45 pm  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **TEMOTU, A YEAR AND A HALF AFTER THE TSUNAMI**

Many Temotu communities affected by the February 2013 tsunami are on their way back to normalcy, thanks to the resilience of communities and some assistance from various organisations.

Restored food gardens, temporary shelters, and some new livelihood opportunities are among the signs of recovery, one year and a half on from the disaster.

“It’s the local people here who take the initiative to make these programs work at a village level,” said Temotu Premier Fr. Charles Brown Beu.

“Many people also took the initiative to reconstruct their homes, and other things, even before they received any assistance.”

After the disaster struck, almost every affected family was left having to build a shelter for themselves.

Solomon Islands Red Cross developed a small program to bridge the gap until communities could have more permanent shelter. With help from Anglican Aid, nails, hammers, saws, fuel, and lighting were distributed.

Of the affected shelters – both destroyed and damaged – 96 per cent received this shelter assistance package.

In Manuputi village, on Santa Cruz island west of Lata, Sarah Meaio’s son helped her rebuild her temporary house using the materials from Red Cross.

“I don’t have any money, but I must live in a good shelter. I must try my best for my children,” said Sarah, who built her kitchen herself.

To assist with recovery and on-going disaster risk management, UNDP has provided the Temotu Provincial Disaster Council with extra support through its Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP).

PRRP partner Live and Learn Education Exchange has been helping communities better prepare themselves for future disasters, with demonstration projects on risk-sensitive farming techniques, and school disaster management plans.

Fr. Beu expressed his gratitude to Red Cross, World Vision, UNDP, Oxfam, Live and Learn and all other organisations that assisted.

“We just don’t have the manpower or experience to completely manage everything on our own right now.”

Earlier this month – one year after they first visited the affected communities – representatives from Red Cross and UNDP’s Pacific Risk Resilience Programme visited Temotu to better understand the situation and inform the next stage.

Along with an assessment by the NDMO of the affected communities immediately after the tsunami struck, and again in April 2013, the recovery planning groups now feel they have a better understanding of the situation.

“This has provided a good opportunity to reflect on what happened and see what we can all do better for next time,” Fr Beu said.

Fr. Beu and some communities both expressed a need for more information from the very beginning, including what to do with the materials provided, and what was coming next. Many issues arose as a result of misunderstanding.

For many communities, land access is at the forefront of their concerns.

Many communities do not own land on higher, safer ground they can easily relocate to. Area 4, near Lata’s airstrip, is one of these communities.

“People in Area 4, for example, are mostly settlers, and so don’t have all the resources they need to rebuild,” Fr. Beu said.

Despite these difficulties, the community was extremely resilient, he said.

“Other communities stepped in to assist, and most people there are now living in moderately comfortable sago palm housing.”

The Area 4 community has also banded together to restore their food sources.

“People here were mentally affected after the tsunami,” said Area 4 resident Edith Dagi.

“People would just stand where the houses were, where the gardens were, and stare. We had become mentally ill from the disaster.”

“But then we got ourselves organised. We made small efforts. We told people – ‘you look after this area; you look after that area,’ and we cleaned everything up.”

Area 4’s food gardens are now almost completely restored, with many houses repaired or rebuilt.

“One small good thing is the soil was very fertile after the tsunami. This was helpful because food on the table is so important – we need to be strong before we can build a house.”

Partially built houses – with just a frame, or walls and no roof – are still scattered around these tsunami-affected villages.

Even for those who do already have building materials on their land – sago palm for roofing and trees for timber – there isn’t necessarily enough available to assist everyone. According to some people surveyed, the price of timber was rising due to this high demand.

Access to chainsaws, labour, and other assistance was also needed, according to many affected communities.

Along with Fr. Beu, the affected communities say Temotu is now waiting for the next phase.

“When we have permanent shelter, we will feel more settled. We are waiting for the government’s plan,” Fr. Beu said.

A permanent housing strategy has been developed for affected communities in the province by MID and MDPAC. The Ministry of Finance allocated funds last month, after reviewing the budget submission.

The plan is yet to be approved by Cabinet.

MLHS and MID intend to make a special presentation to Caucus and Cabinet to support this submission.

#

**For media enquiries:**

Patterson Fakavai

Director Architecture and Building Division

Ph: +677 28605 / +677 25641

Mob: +677 7714 843