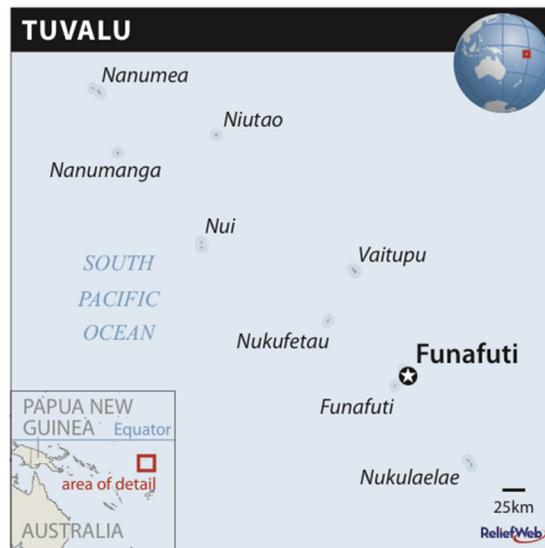


## Tuvalu situation update: 3 April 2015

### Securing health from disastrous impacts of cyclone Pam in Tuvalu

Cyclone Pam, which had its centre of force and most disastrous impact in Vanuatu also ran through the islands of Tuvalu on 13 March 2015. The force of the winds appeared to have reduced slightly when it hit Tuvalu but much of the damage was caused by a combination of forceful winds and seawater infiltration of the inlands.



Map Sources: UNCS, Gov't of U.S.A.  
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created Jun 2010 – [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)



(Credit : Fiji National University)



*(Credit : Fiji National University)*

### **Impact of cyclone**

Of the nine inhabited islands, at least 3 had significant damage to the properties, crops and health centres. An assessment of south group of 3 islands is yet to be completed. Fortunately, Funafuti where the international airport and the national Princess Margaret Hospital are located was unscathed by direct effects of the cyclone except some damage to the seawall.

By the second week after the storm, brief accounts of the effects of the cyclone had reached Funafuti. Notably there were no deaths or injuries directly related to the cyclone. Health assessment teams covered the islands by group, north, central and south.

#### Central group of islands:

First to complete within days of the cyclone was for the central group of islands which are Nui (542 inhabitants), Vaitupu (1552 inhabitants) and Nukufetau (536 inhabitants).

Nui was more affected than the other two islands in the central group. This has included floating of the human bodies and body parts as the cemetery was flooded. People of the area had collected them and reburied them. Roads were impassable by vehicles due to accumulation of debris from fallen trees and sand from seawater flooding.

Of the 145 households in Nui, 65 were displaced and moved to higher grounds due to flooding of their dwellings while there was significant structural damage to 23 houses. Displaced people were sheltered in 3 places, the primary school, chapel and the community hall. Flooding also caused overflowing of several toilets. Though the islands were using rain water collections in closed-lid tanks, 6 of the seven key water points tested were positive for *E.coli* contamination.

Vast amount of agriculture including jack fruit, pulaka and taro have been destroyed and the population was in need of outside food supply.

The health center in Nui was also badly damaged including overflowing of the septic tank, washing away of hospital waste and damage to the incinerator. Health services operated through the school building. There were a few cases of diarrhea (17) and influenza like illness (7) reported since the cyclone but they were still below the pre-cyclone usual occurrence and not yet certain if they will give rise to fresh outbreaks.

Damages to the houses, agriculture and other infrastructure in the other two islands of the central group were less severe and health centers were functioning normally.

#### Northern group of islands:

A rapid assessment was also completed in the 3 northern Islands of Nanumanga, Niutoo and Nanumea home to 481, 606 and 556 population respectively.

Nanumanga island suffered more damage than the other 2 northern islands. Almost 100 houses are damaged from floods. Displaced people, numbering up to 200, were accommodated in the school while the rest were accommodated in the houses of their relatives. Sand deposits from seawater flooding are seen up to 200 meters inland. The health centre located close to the seashore was significantly damaged particularly the examination room, female ward and maternity section.

Niutoo and Nanumea islands have experienced lesser damage. Minor damage to the health centre in Niutoo was reported but medical supplies and services were intact. Flooding of graveyards was also noted in Nanumea.



*Properties were damaged by the strong winds and incursion with sea waves. (Credit : Fiji National University)*

Sothern group of islands:

The assessment team that visited these islands is yet to release the report.

**Government and partners' response**

Before the cyclone struck, warnings were issued to the population and certain preparatory actions had been taken at short notice. Interim caretaker government had swung into action early, declared a state of emergency and led the recovery efforts. The National Disaster Committee was activated and is coordinating all recovery efforts in Funafuti. Assessment teams comprising of government staff and partners were dispatched via boats to central group of islands within 2 days and to north within a week

and later to the south group of islands. The teams also carried with them some immediate relief items and water testing tools.

Initial Government assessments have led to requests for water, medicines, shelter and food. Despite logistical challenge, initial responses from the Government of Tuvalu have included food, fuel, generators, medical supplies, and shelter kits. Further support is being provided for the cleaning-up of storm debris.

Several partners came with early assistance including technical, funding and material support to Tuvalu for recovery. They included WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, OCHA, World Bank, DFAT, New Zealand Red Cross & IFRC, Fiji National University and governments of New Zealand, Netherlands, UAE, Taiwan and USA.

WHO assistance included immediate deployment of a public health specialist and an environmental health specialist to assist in the health situation assessment and early disease prevention activities. A small rapid cash donation for urgent expenses was also made to the interim government. An early warning disease surveillance and response was set up to enhance the ongoing surveillance. Medical items were ordered in preparation for possible diarrheal disease outbreaks and assistance was also provided for vector control.