

Mid-Term Evaluation: Tropical Cyclone Gita Response and Recovery Program MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Investment Summary

Program Name	Tropical Cyclone Gita Response and Recovery Program Aidworks Investments: INM492 Tropical Cyclone Gita response and recovery; INL881 Tonga Economic and Public Sector Reform Program; INK206 Nuku'alofa Urban Development Sector Project.
Timeframe:	21 Feb 2018 to 30 Jun 2021
Value:	Total value: A\$12,202,828
Implementing partner:	Various- including multilateral development banks, commercial contractors, international and national NGOs, Australian Government entities.
Country/Region:	Tonga
Primary sector:	Response and Recovery
Initiative end of program outcomes:	<p>As a close friend and partner of Tonga we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver assistance that meets the humanitarian needs of affected people in a timely and accountable manner that supports human dignity; • Respect and reinforce through our actions that the Government of Tonga will lead the response and recovery effort; • We will support its efforts and deliver our assistance in a coordinated manner and in conjunction with other partners; • Support the Government to identify and plan its response and recovery through close policy dialogue, ongoing participation in coordination meetings (including selected cluster meetings) and other appropriate mechanisms; and • Deliver our assistance through efficient and effective mechanisms that are appropriate to Tonga's context.

Review Summary

The purpose of the Mid-term Evaluation will be to assess the quality and impact of Australia's Tropical Cyclone Gita response and recovery package to date. Findings from the Mid-term Evaluation will be used to:

- Steer the ongoing, DFAT-funded recovery package;
- Shape advocacy on both the broader recovery efforts continuing in-country, as well as disaster risk management and preparedness to mitigate the impacts of natural hazards in Tonga; and
- Provide lessons learned for future Australian humanitarian responses in both Tonga and the broader Pacific region, noting the region's high vulnerability to natural disasters and Australia's strong commitment to humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery.

The review examined Australia's humanitarian response and the transition into recovery. It did not include the actions of the Australian Defence Force or the Australian Federal Police.

Review Team:

- Beth Eggleston, Humanitarian Advisory Group (Team leader)
- Josie Flint, Humanitarian Advisory Group (Humanitarian and development expert)
- Emele Latu (Civil Society Forum of Tonga, National consultant)

The evaluation took place between December 2018 and April 2019. Field work was conducted on Tongatapu and 'Eua between 11 and 21 February 2019.

Key evaluation messages:

The evaluation found Australia's support to Tonga in response to the impact of Tropical Cyclone Gita on 12 February 2018 was largely appropriate, timely and effective. Australia engaged with the Government of Tonga, clusters and NGO partners to inform the initial response, which was well aligned with Tonga's priorities.

Our implementing partners managed efficient programs, particularly by leveraging existing development programs. New modalities used to mobilise Australia private sector companies for electricity restoration, and cash assistance to marginalised groups, were also successful in achieving priority outcomes. The ability to improve localisation could be improved by strengthening the organisational or institutional capacity of local partners to receive funding.

Australian support was assessed to have reinforced national response and coordination mechanisms, by working with existing national systems and structures. However the national systems for collecting, managing and sharing data were not strong, and this is an area recommended for future strengthening support. Coordination could also be improved by increasing outreach to partners about Australia's capabilities.

The evaluation also found there was inconsistent consideration of accountability to affected populations across the Australian package- and suggests this should be prioritised in future responses, including by supporting partners to develop and implement robust mechanisms.

The transition to recovery was more difficult, and future assistance could be strengthened by improving planning, and seeking continuing of sectors and partnerships between response and recovery.

Overall response to the evaluation

DFAT agrees with the six recommendations of the evaluation. The recommendations will be taken up both by Nuku'alofa Post to improve preparedness for future humanitarian responses in Tonga, and by DFAT Humanitarian, NGOs, and Partnerships Division to inform Australian assistance provided in other countries. Implementation of many of the recommendations are already underway.

Management response to mid-term evaluation of TC Gita

Recommendation	Response	Action	Responsibility and timeframe
<p>1. DFAT should adopt a similar approach to engaging with national governments and partners in future responses in the region, building on established and respectful relationships.</p> <p>Australia could improve the appropriateness of future responses in Tonga by strengthening information management processes prior to and during humanitarian responses.</p>	Agree.	<p>Australia will continue to deliver humanitarian assistance in partnership with national governments and local partners, building on our existing strong and respectful relationships.</p> <p>DFAT will continue to further strengthen information management for future responses in Tonga including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Placement of a Disaster Risk Management specialist to support NEMO's systems - Supporting partners in country, including Tonga Red Cross Society, and Emergency Management Clusters, to improve information management processes within Tonga's systems - Supporting OCHA to provide support on humanitarian information management across the Pacific, including in Tonga - Policy engagement and advocacy for improved information management among donors, and between donors and government. 	<p>DFAT Humanitarian, NGOs, and Partnerships Division will continue to coordinate Australian humanitarian responses in line with this principle. Ongoing.</p> <p>Nuku'alofa Post will continue to implement these programs of support, and engage on humanitarian policy in Tonga. Ongoing.</p>
<p>2. DFAT can strengthen the effectiveness of future responses in the Pacific by developing and sharing a recovery strategy with external stakeholders that articulates the transition from response to recovery and identifies clear recovery objectives.</p>	Agree.	<p>DFAT begins early recovery planning alongside humanitarian relief, in the response phase. This lays the foundations for longer term recovery, reconstruction and development activities. Recovery programming is subject to consultation with the affected government and will seek to leverage existing Australian aid programming.</p> <p>Where the nature and scale of a response is significant, DFAT documents options to support the plans of the affected government. In relevant Pacific responses, DFAT will publish a summary of Australia's support for recovery plans within Crisis Hub on DFAT's website, and will share it with local stakeholders.</p>	<p>DFAT Humanitarian, NGOs, and Partnerships Division with relevant Post/Desk will publish plans and share with stakeholders. 1-3 months following a disaster.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Action	Responsibility and timeframe
<p>3. DFAT should continue to work with partners who have both response and recovery capabilities, and continue to provide mechanisms in partnership agreements for surge funding to respond to disasters. DFAT should also continue to resource posts to manage response and recovery packages in the Pacific, with dedicated support roles where required.</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>DFAT will use the opportunities of new or extensions to partnerships and contracts for programs in Tonga to build in flexibility and provisions for humanitarian response. This would build on the work already undertaken by DFAT in Fiji and Vanuatu.</p> <p>DFAT will ensure posts have adequate resources and expertise to support effective delivery of response and recovery packages, including the deployment of surge support where appropriate.</p>	<p>Nuku'alofa Post will review contracts as they are negotiated. Ongoing.</p> <p>Humanitarian, NGOs, and Partnerships Division will coordinate and deploy surge support as required. Ongoing.</p>
<p>4. DFAT should support partners to design and develop strong accountability mechanisms by resourcing their development and implementation.</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue supporting the Safety and Protection Cluster Coordinator (within Ministry of Internal Affairs), with responsibility for managing the national complaints mechanism. DFAT will also work with partners in future responses to resource development and implementation of suitable feedback mechanisms through agreed response and recovery programs.</p> <p>DFAT is also conducting a pilot activity in Fiji and Vanuatu to support partners to strengthen communications with disaster-affected communities. DFAT will share lessons from this pilot activity across the Pacific region.</p>	<p>Nuku'alofa Post. Ongoing.</p> <p>Humanitarian, NGOs, and Partnerships Division.</p>
<p>5. DFAT should continue to support national leadership and capacity in future responses by :</p> <p>5.1 Strengthening the institutional capacity of national and local partners to receive direct funding, including conducting due diligence processes as part of preparedness</p> <p>5.2 Considering more direct funding, including administrative costs, for national partners</p> <p>5.3 Using the localisation approaches and tools in the Joint Monitoring</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>DFAT will endeavour to work with more local partners where possible. We note there is a limited number of suitable (non-government) local partners in Tonga with which DFAT does not have an existing arrangement. DFAT will assess the market for additional suitable partner organisations, and consider if and how they might be strengthened.</p> <p>The Joint DFAT-MFAT Humanitarian Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF) has been designed with flexibility to adapt to the needs of local contexts. When the MEF is utilised in a response, DFAT agrees to ensure that it is operationalised in a way which supports the leadership and decision-making of national actors, including increasing localisation of response and recovery funding where possible.</p>	<p>Nuku'alofa Post will identify and review additional suitable organisations by 30 June 2020.</p> <p>Humanitarian, NGOs, and Partnerships Division will coordinate and encourage increased localised, direct funding will be considered in future responses.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Action	Responsibility and timeframe
<p>and Evaluation frameworks to inform decision-making.</p>			
<p>6. DFAT should build on positive coordination with the government and other actors in Tonga. To prepare for future responses, Australia should continue to strengthen communication with key partners about approaches, capabilities, resources and assets that could be activated or deployed in a response.</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>DFAT has briefed the Government of Tonga, donor partners, and key national response partners in the lead-up to the 2019-20 cyclone season to strengthen communication and preparedness. We will continue to seek opportunities to increase partner understanding of Australian capabilities.</p>	<p>Nuku'alofa Post. Ongoing.</p>