



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE TROPICAL CYCLONE GITA RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PACKAGE

August 2019





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The review team comprised Beth Eggleston (Team Leader) and Josie Flint (Humanitarian and Development Expert) from Humanitarian Advisory Group, and Emele Latu (National Consultant) from the Civil Society Forum of Tonga. Staff from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Nuku'alofa post accompanied the team at some stages of the review. The team brought to this evaluation humanitarian, program management, and monitoring and evaluation expertise alongside a sound understanding of the context and corporate knowledge of DFAT's systems and processes.

The evaluation team would like to express sincere thanks to the DFAT staff, partners and communities for their insights they shared during this evaluation process. The team is grateful to DFAT staff in Nuku'alofa for facilitating the evaluation team's visit, with particular thanks to Chantelle Boland (Second Secretary, Australian High Commission). The team also thanks partners that facilitated field visits including Tonga Red Cross Society, Tonga Waste Limited, and the staff and communities that hosted the team.

Cover: Loading Australian relief supplies for distribution transported by RAAF C-17 aircraft. Photo: DFAT

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Cyclone Gita damage to Parliament House in Nuku-alofa. Photo: Beth Eggleston

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia is a significant long-term donor to the Kingdom of Tonga and has supported development and disaster risk management programs for many years. Tropical Cyclone (TC) Gita struck Tonga in February 2018, causing destruction across multiple islands and affecting 80,000 people. Australia responded with a \$14 million response and recovery package to support the provision of assistance, including humanitarian supplies, immediate shelter, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs, and support for the health, livelihoods, essential services, gender and protection, and cash transfer sectors. Australia continues to support longer-term recovery efforts, including through reconstructing and repairing schools, as well as facilitating improved capacity within government to manage development finance.

This report details the findings and recommendations from a mid-term evaluation of the Australian response and recovery package for TC Gita. The evaluation assesses the quality and impact of Australia's assistance in the response using the Joint New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)–DFAT Humanitarian Monitoring & Evaluation Framework for the Pacific (MEF).

At the time of the evaluation, several recovery programs funded through the package had not started implementation. This evaluation focuses on the humanitarian response phase and an assessment of the transition phase into recovery. The scope of this evaluation does not include evaluating the responses of the Australian Defence Force or the Australian Police Force. Findings from the mid-term evaluation will be used to inform the ongoing recovery package, shape advocacy on the broader recovery efforts continuing in country, and provide lessons for future Australian humanitarian responses in both Tonga and the broader Pacific region.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview of the key findings and associated recommendations, in alignment with the six Strategic Results Statements outlined in the MEF. The recommendations highlight areas for improvement for future responses in Tonga and the existing recovery program, as well as recommendations that may be more broadly applied to Australian disaster response and recovery programs in the Pacific.

STRATEGIC RESULTS STATEMENT (SRS)

SRS 1. — Our humanitarian response was appropriate and relevant

FINDING 1:

Australia's humanitarian assistance was largely appropriate.

- 1.1. Australia engaged at a scale that respected and supported national leadership and built on existing programming and partnerships. Assistance was aligned with the Tongan Government's Response Plan priorities and identified needs.
- 1.2. Appropriateness of assistance was undermined across the sector by poor information management.

RECOMMENDATION 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. Australia could improve the appropriateness of future responses in Tonga by strengthening information management processes prior to and during humanitarian responses.

SRS 2. — Our humanitarian response was timely and effective

FINDING 2:

Australia's response was timely and effective. The ongoing recovery has been delayed, and could have built more intentionally on the strengths of the response phase.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

SRS 3. — Our humanitarian response was efficient and well managed

FINDING 3:

Implementing partners have run efficient programs; efficiencies were maximised by leveraging existing development programs.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

SRS 4 — Our humanitarian response engaged with and was accountable to affected communities and vulnerable people

FINDING 4:

Engagement with and accountability to affected populations and vulnerable groups could be improved.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

DFAT should support partners to design and develop strong accountability mechanisms by resourcing their development and implementation.

SRS 5 — Our humanitarian response reinforced national and local leadership and capacity as much as possible and engaged international actors when necessary

FINDING 5:

Australia's response and recovery package actively supported national leadership and reinforced the national response systems and structures.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

DFAT should continue to support national leadership and capacity in future responses by:

- 5.1. Strengthening the institutional capacity of national and local partners to receive direct funding, including conducting due diligence processes as part of preparedness
- 5.2. Considering more direct funding, including administrative costs, for national partners
- 5.3. Using the localisation approaches and tools in the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation framework to inform decision-making.

SRS 6 — Our humanitarian response was coordinated and complementary

FINDING 6:

Australia's assistance was complementary and coordinated with the Government of Tonga and external actors. Better preparedness could have further enhanced coordination efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

INTRODUCTION

Australia is a significant long-term donor to the Kingdom of Tonga and has supported development and disaster risk management programs for many years. Tropical Cyclone (TC) Gita struck Tonga in February 2018, causing destruction across multiple islands and affecting 80,000 people. Australia responded, supporting the delivery life-saving assistance, including humanitarian supplies, immediate shelter, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs. Cash for vulnerable groups, support for gender and protection needs and restoring critical infrastructure were also included in the package. The recovery package was designed to support longer-term reconstruction efforts, including through reconstructing and repairing schools, WASH programming and infrastructure, as well as facilitating improved capacity within government to manage development finance.

A year after TC Gita, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) commissioned a mid-term evaluation of Australia's assistance. The evaluation considered Australian investments across the response and recovery package. At the time of the evaluation, key recovery programs funded through the package had either not yet begun, or only recently started implementation. This evaluation focuses on the response phase and the transition phase to recovery. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the quality and impact of Australia's TC Gita response, using the Joint New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)–DFAT Humanitarian Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Pacific (MEF).

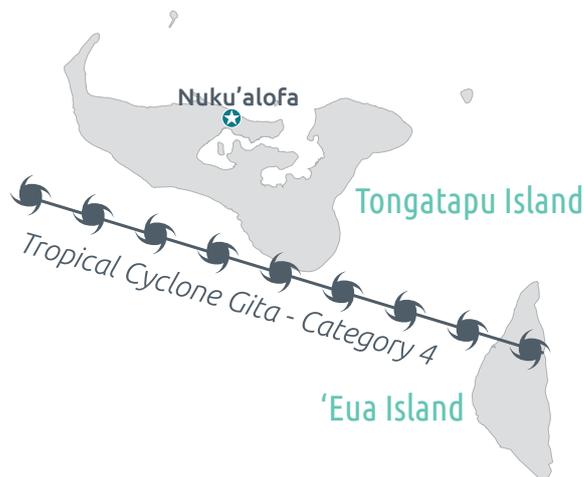
Findings from the mid-term evaluation will be used to inform the ongoing recovery package, shape advocacy on the broader recovery efforts continuing in country, and provide lessons for future Australian humanitarian responses in both Tonga and the broader Pacific region.

CONTEXT

Tropical Cyclone Gita made landfall in Tonga on 12 February 2018 as a category 4 storm with winds up to 230 km/h. It was the strongest tropical cyclone to

impact Tongatapu and 'Eua islands since TC Isaac in March 1982. The storm surge reached one metre above normal high tide, and 200 mm of rain fell in 24 hours, resulting in widespread flooding.¹ Around 80,000 people on the islands of Tongatapu and 'Eua, where most of Tonga's population lives, were heavily affected. The cyclone damaged or destroyed almost 2,000 homes, caused the evacuation of over 4,500 people and left more than 80 per cent of homes in Tongatapu without power (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Overview of TC Gita impact



 **80,000** affected / **13,096** households on Tongatapu and **889** on 'Eua

 **4,500** evacuated in **108** evacuation centres

 **2,000** private houses destroyed

 **25,000** children affected by **109** damaged or destroyed schools

 **45%** of people in need of access to clean drinking water

¹ Government of Tonga, *Post Disaster Rapid Needs Assessment*, Tropical Cyclone Gita, 12 February 2018, p. 11



*Reconstruction of housing on 'Eua through Australian-funded CARE/MORDI/Live & Learn shelter programming.
Photo: Beth Eggleston*

AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT FOR TONGA'S RESPONSE

The Government of Tonga declared a state of emergency on Monday 12 February 2018 and requested targeted assistance from the Australian Government on Tuesday 13 February 2018. Australia mobilised support within 24 hours of Tonga's request, announcing an initial \$350,000 for the provision of relief supplies and technical personnel to support response efforts. A Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) C-17 Globemaster was deployed on 13 February to deliver humanitarian relief supplies, arriving in Tonga within 24 hours of TC Gita making landfall.²

On 16 February 2018, Australia announced additional funding of \$3 million to support the response efforts of the Tongan Red Cross Society (TRCS), the Women and Children's Crisis Centre (WCCC), Australian non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners, and the deployment of teams of electrical line technicians to restore power across the island.³

A third component of recovery funding of \$10.5 million to support Tonga's recovery efforts was announced on 23 March 2018. It is targeting reconstruction of schools and support for WASH, the private sector and the Government of Tonga's coordination of recovery efforts.⁴

\$12.2 million has been funded through the package to date, with several programs ongoing. An additional portion of funds is yet to be negotiated with the Government of Tonga, including the Private Sector Recovery Fund (approx. \$2 million) and support for the rebuilding of Parliament House.⁵

Overall, \$3.8 million was allocated for initial humanitarian response activities, and a further \$10.5 million for the broader recovery effort.⁶ The funding breakdown is shown in Table 1.

² Government of Australia, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Media Release, 13 February 2018

³ Government of Australia, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Media Release, 16 February 2018; Government of Australia, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Media Release, 22 February 2018

⁴ Government of Australia, Tropical Cyclone Gita, 19 June 2018, <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/investment-priorities/building-resilience/humanitarian-preparedness-and-response/Pages/cyclone-gita.aspx>

⁵ The evaluation did not assess the rebuilding of Parliament House project as part of the recovery program.

⁶ Government of Australia, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Media Release, 23 March 2018

Table 1: Overview of Australian funding to partners

PARTNER		VALUE AUD
RELIEF PHASE		
Palladium	Deployment and replenishment of prepositioned supplies as well as logistical support to local authorities	\$1,100,312
Australian Red Cross	Distribution and replenishment of prepositioned supplies as well as shelter recovery	\$690,000
Emergency Management Australia	Deployment of electrical restoration teams under AUSASSISTPLAN to restore power networks	\$648,051
Government of Tonga and World Bank	Social welfare payment for the elderly and disabled released through Government of Tonga's social protection systems	\$500,000
CARE Australia, MORDI and Live and Learn	Support for shelter, WASH and livelihoods recovery in damage affected areas of Tongatapu and 'Eua	\$500,000
Women and Children's Crisis Centre	Provision of critical, lifesaving services for vulnerable women and children	\$150,000
United Nations Population Fund	Deployment and replenishment of sexual and reproductive health commodities and hygiene kits	\$90,000
International Planned Parenthood Federation and Tonga Family Health Association	Support for sexual and reproductive health needs post-crisis via the Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations (SPRINT)	\$65,000
Emergency Management Australia	Deployment of Disaster Assistance Response Team under AUSASSISTPLAN to provide rapid damage assessment	\$36,595
Australian Medical Assistance Team	Deployment of clinical advisor to support the health system response	\$22,870
TOTAL RESPONSE PHASE		\$3,802,828
RECOVERY PHASE		
World Bank	Establishment of a Central Support Unit within the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (\$4 million) and retrofitting, repairing and reconstructing damaged schools and other critical public infrastructure (\$3 million)	\$7,000,000
Live and Learn	Community WASH investment to restore WASH systems and improve resilience	\$1,000,000
Asian Development Bank	Waste management and sanitation programming including the reconstruction of waste management facilities	\$400,000
TOTAL RECOVERY PHASE		\$8,400,000
TOTAL RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PHASE (*FUNDS PROGRAMMED TO DATE)		\$12,202,828

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This evaluation was commissioned by Nuku'alofa Post. The package and this evaluation are managed by Nuku'alofa Post and supported by the Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division.

The purpose of the review was to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of Australia's response and recovery efforts in Tonga following TC Gita. The evaluation considered Australian investments across the response and recovery package. However, at the time of the evaluation, key recovery programs had either not yet or only recently begun implementation, as a result the evaluation focused on the response phase and the transition to recovery. The evaluation was limited to the first 12 months of program implementation, from February 2018 to February 2019.

The six areas of enquiry that guided the review process were drawn from the Strategic Results Statements (SRS) in the MEF:

1. APPROPRIATENESS AND RELEVANCE
2. EFFECTIVENESS AND TIMELINESS
3. EFFICIENCY
4. NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP
5. COORDINATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY
6. ENGAGEMENT OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS.

METHODS

The evaluation used a primarily qualitative approach, combining stakeholder interviews, a document and literature review, and focus group discussions. Field visits to 'Eua and various site visits collected feedback on the experience of the affected population. The key methods are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Overview of key methods



All evidence was triangulated where possible to ensure a strong evidence base for findings. Emerging themes from interviews were tested in subsequent interviews and focus group discussions. Documents were sought during the field visits to substantiate and provide further evidence in relation to key findings. The evaluation matrix is provided in Appendix 1.



Local contractors cleaning debris after the cyclone. Photo: DFAT

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations are important to understand with respect to the findings and recommendations of this review.

Time: The review was a rapid exercise conducted within approximately six weeks, with 10 days based in Tonga. Given time limitations, it was not feasible to review all available documentation or engage with all stakeholders. It was not possible to observe all program activities or to verify the quality of all programs.

Attribution: The nature of humanitarian assistance and the range of factors that influence humanitarian outcomes (including other donor inputs and government policies) make it difficult to attribute improvements or change to assistance provided by Australia and its partners. Wherever possible, the review team has indicated linkages between Australian investments and program outcomes and impact.

Scope: The original terms of reference included a review of both the response and recovery phases. However, at the time of the evaluation, some key recovery programs had not yet begun implementation, as a result the evaluation focuses on the response phase and the transition to recovery.

Potential bias: Staff from post were present in most interviews. This may have influenced the views expressed.

Review framework: The MEF provides a comprehensive framework for monitoring and evaluation, but not all subsections of the MEF were relevant to this response context so selected areas were identified to focus the review, as detailed in the evaluation plan.

FINDINGS

MEF STRATEGIC RESULTS STATEMENT (SRS) ①

– Our humanitarian response was appropriate and relevant

FINDING 1:

Australia’s humanitarian assistance was largely appropriate.

- 1.1. Australia engaged at a scale that respected and supported national leadership, and built on existing programming and partnerships. Assistance was aligned with the Tongan Government’s Response Plan priorities and identified needs.
- 1.2. Appropriateness of assistance was undermined across the sector by poor information management.

TC Gita Immediate Response Plan and the *Post-Disaster Rapid Assessment* at a scale that matched needs in the response phase.⁸ Australia’s support, including funding, relief supplies and logistical and technical support for the response, was both appropriate and important in addressing humanitarian needs.⁹ The package comprised a diversity of modalities, partners and sectors to address needs and build upon existing development programs in geographical areas across the two affected islands.

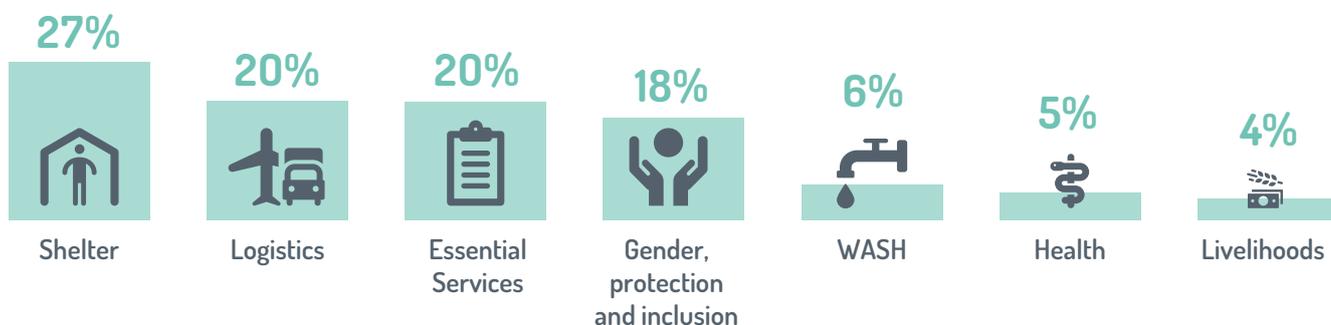
1.1 SECTORAL FOCUS

In the response phase, Australia supported the shelter, health, gender, protection and inclusion, essential services and logistics sectors shown in the summary below (Figure 3).¹⁰ The sectoral focus was determined in collaboration with the Government of Tonga, and coordination was undertaken with other key donors and partners to address needs across sectors. The package strongly aligns with the *TC Gita Immediate Response Plan* priorities of essential services, shelter, WASH and safety and protection, food security and livelihoods.¹¹

1. RESPONSE CORRESPONDED WITH NEEDS AND PRIORITIES⁷

Australia, as one of the largest donors for the cyclone response and recovery effort, supported the Government of Tonga’s priorities as outlined in the

Figure 3: Overview of Australian assistance by sector for the response phase



⁷ SRS 1.1

⁸ Interviews 7, 14, 21, 20, 40, 32, 50; Government of Tonga, *Tropical Cyclone Gita Immediate Response Plan*, 23 February 2018 and Government of Tonga, *Post Disaster Rapid Assessment*, 12 February 2018.

⁹ Interviews 2, 4, 8, 15, 21, 24, 26, 32, 39, 50.

¹⁰ The gender, protection and inclusion sector allocation includes the cash top-up payments, distributed by the Tongan government with support from World Bank.

¹¹ Government of Tonga, *Tropical Cyclone Gita Immediate Response Plan*, 23 February 2018, p.5.

1.2 PARTNERS

Australia funded a range of national and international organisations and one government ministry in the response. Australia selected partners by virtue of their longstanding presence and humanitarian programming expertise in Tonga, ability to align with Australian thematic priorities such as gender, protection and inclusion, and support for the Government of Tonga’s priorities. This, along with experienced and stable DFAT staff at posts, gave Australia a significant profile and enabled it to influence program quality, and positively increased Australia’s profile as a humanitarian donor.

Australia is already working with several existing national partners as part of bilateral development programming, and it was appropriate to scale up or direct additional funding for new activities to these partners.¹² In the initial stages of the response staff at post used their contextual knowledge to support additional funding to the Tonga Family Health Association (TFHA) and the WCCC. This was done through the SPRINT mechanism through IPPF, and the regional program Pacific Women, managed by Cardno.

Direct support to the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP) was provided in the form of cash-top up payments for individuals registered for social welfare disability and retirement schemes. Australia also funded new partners, such as Australian power companies, through a public–private partnership managed by Emergency Management Australia, Palladium and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA – for sexual and reproductive health needs).

The Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) rapid response mechanism was initiated, and CARE Australia was selected to build on its existing partnerships and expertise in country with the Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation Tonga Trust (MORDI) and Live and Learn.

The percentage allocation of funding by type of partner for the response phase is shown in Figure 4. The key strength during the response phase was the identification of partners with strong pre-existing in country relationships, and many with established partnerships with DFAT. One challenge with the number of partnerships (8 contracts) was the pressure of partnership management on staff at post. This was resourced through the deployment of an additional staff member at post to manage the response and recovery package; this is further examined in section 3.

¹² Interviews 20, 25

¹³ Interviews 4, 12, 21, 22, 40

Figure 4: Overview of partner allocations



1.3 TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The scale of deployment of Australian personnel for the response was appropriate.¹³ A strategic decision was made to not ‘over-deploy’ surge personnel, whilst still maintaining a balance of providing adequate personnel to meet needs.

Technical deployees included Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) personnel to support needs assessments, and one Australian Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) deployee (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Overview of Australian technical personnel deployed

-  **1** Medical specialist conducted a health assessment
-  **4** Disaster assistance response team members conducted structural assessments of damaged public buildings
-  **6** DFAT crisis response experts supported implementation of australia’s response



Loading Australian relief supplies for distribution transported by RAAF C-17 aircraft. Photo: DFAT

A Crisis Response Team was also deployed to support the team at post. Teams of electrical technicians were deployed through Emergency Management Australia to work alongside New Zealand and Tonga Power Ltd teams to restore power across Tongatapu.

Surge deployees were kept in country no longer than necessary. For example, once the AUSMAT deployee had assessed health centres and hospitals and found them to be largely undamaged, a determination was made in collaboration with the Ministry of Health that no further assistance was needed.¹⁴

1.4 RELIEF SUPPLIES

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) transported 135 tonnes of Australian Government and NGO partner relief supplies to Tonga.¹⁵ The Australian Red Cross and UNFPA released prepositioned supplies through the warehouse in Brisbane, and Palladium supported logistics. These included emergency shelter kits, tarpaulins, mosquito nets, solar lights, kitchen kits, sexual and reproductive health kits and hygiene kits, as well as seven large electricity generators. The relief supplies were a highly visible part of the response.¹⁶

The relief items distributed aligned with identified needs, such as shelter kits for people whose housing was damaged by the cyclone, but the use of, appropriateness and impact of the different types of humanitarian supplies was more difficult to measure. There was no systematic means of collecting data or feedback from affected populations (via partners) on how the supplies were used and what real-time changes, if any, should be made to relief items to better meet needs.

The review has since identified some supplies that could be made more appropriate for future responses. The full range of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) kits (0–12)¹⁷ should be provided in future in coordination with the Tongan government (while acknowledging their restrictions on some of these items). There has been a move to ensure that hygiene and dignity kits will be packed in Tonga and contain items and brands that are familiar and appropriate for affected populations. Stakeholders also identified the need for a multi-agency central register of the various kits that are pre-positioned in Tonga to assist with coordination.¹⁸ Community members mentioned that the distribution of the kits was sometimes duplicated and uncoordinated.¹⁹

14 Interviews 4, 12, 22

15 DFAT, Aid Fact Sheet, Tonga, 2018; Partner agreements

16 Interviews 5, 21, 22, 24, 34, 35.

17 Explanation of the 1-12 SRH kits can be found here:

<https://iawg.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/MISP-cheat-sheet-rev.04-2010.pdf>

18 Interview 38

19 Focus group discussion; Interview 24

“When we got to a house there were seven kits (from different agencies) already.” (NGO staff member)²⁰

Box 1: Support for pre-positioned supplies in Tonga



Australia has supported the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) as part of ongoing programming to develop stockpiles of prepositioned supplies in warehouses across Tonga. The mobilisation of existing stockpiles was supplemented with additional supplies transported by the ADF via the Australian Red Cross. These supplies were an important and highly visible part of the response. TRCS is now 100 per cent replenished with prepositioned supplies and has a greater range of locally procured non-food items. Relief items, such as dignity kits, were also donated to the Tongan government for use in future disasters. Funding under the package has also allowed for repair and maintenance of warehouses for TRCS so that prepositioned stock can be properly protected.²¹

Meleane Mahe, TRCS with re-stocked, pre-positioned supplies on 'Eua. Photo: Beth Eggleston

1.5 CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

The RAAF used seven C-17 transport flights to deliver Australian Government, NGO, and World Bank supplies and technical specialists to Nuku'alofa, including 135 tonnes of relief items including emergency shelters, hygiene and dignity kits, and water purification tablets. A four-member ADF Support and Response Team provided logistical support and worked alongside their counterparts in His Majesty's Armed Forces in the NEMO Operations Cell, and their support was considered productive.²² The decision not to deploy a large ADF contingent and assets was also appropriate given the scale of the response.

INFORMATION GAPS AND QUALITY ISSUES WERE ADDRESSED²³

Australia engaged with the Government of Tonga, including NEMO and relevant ministries, the clusters and NGO partners to gather relevant information in the initial response phase.²⁴ Many partners and government stakeholders reported strong engagement and communication with post that facilitated sharing of information in the response phase, and this supported decision-making on funding priorities.²⁵ The existing 'Australia Assists' deployee function in NEMO supported sharing of information about government priorities and needs with Australia and New Zealand by prior agreement, minimising duplication.²⁶ A balance must be struck between providing support to NEMO and having an Australian 'go-to' focal point embedded in NEMO who can become a default primary contact for Australia, although the intent is to strengthen national structures and processes.

20 Interview 24

21 Interview 48

22 Interview 32

23 SRS 1.2

24 DFAT, *After Action Review: Tropical Cyclone Gita Response*; Interviews 9, 19, 22, 50

25 Interviews 2, 14, 29

26 Interview 6

Broader issues of access to and quality of information were challenging in the response phase, including a clear understanding of needs and availability of disaggregated vulnerability data.²⁷ Community representatives and partners highlighted the duplication of needs assessments during the response, which created frustration and negative impressions of engagement with the humanitarian community.²⁸ For example, some communities on 'Eua reported that they were assessed 29 times by various responding agencies.²⁹ The Government of Tonga's processes for collecting, managing and sharing needs assessment data and population information – including disaggregated data on vulnerable groups – amongst ministries, to clusters, and to partners were unclear for partners and donors.³⁰ Due to this, DFAT sometimes lacked quality information on which to base programming decisions, and some decision-making was necessarily opportunistic and based on the available data at hand, including that from existing partners.

“The lack of disaggregated data was a real challenge for our support.” (International actor)³¹

Key stakeholders suggest that DFAT is well placed to support improved humanitarian information management internally and externally. Internally, DFAT could develop clearer processes for information collection, management and utilisation in decision-making.³² This might include, for example, delegating key information management functions at post during a response (e.g., managing information from clusters and key donor meetings), or articulating more clearly to partners what information is needed and how it will be used to prioritise programming decisions. Whilst the Joint Monitoring Framework was new and piloted at only a high level during this response, there is opportunity in the future to use the tools in the MEF

more widely, and adapt them so they can be used by in-country partners managing Australian humanitarian funds. This would support a standardised approach to gathering information, as well as a way to collect information and feedback about the quality and utility of Australian humanitarian supplies.³³

At the humanitarian system level, DFAT can advocate for and support improved information management systems and processes. There is a key opportunity in the preparedness phase to support the establishment and testing of systems that would substantially improve the effective collection, sharing and use of information in future responses.

2. PLANS ADDRESSED RECOVERY AND LONGER-TERM RESILIENCE³⁴

Planning for Tonga's recovery needs after the cyclone was prioritised by DFAT, as demonstrated through a recovery planning mission by HPD and Post in consultation with the Tongan Government in March 2018. During this planning process, Australia discussed and agreed with the Government of Tonga on the sectoral focus for support for recovery, and subsequently developed a \$10.5 million recovery package. Further discussion of the response to recovery transition is contained in section 2.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

DFAT should adopt a similar approach to engaging with partners and national governments in future responses in the region, building on established and respectful relationships. Australia could improve the appropriateness of future responses in Tonga by strengthening information management processes prior to and during humanitarian responses.

27 Catalan, H, *Post Disaster Needs Assessment: Gita Cyclone Report Tonga 2018*, October 2018, p.5; Tonkin & Taylor International Ltd, *TC Gita Emergency Preparedness and Response: A comprehensive review and lessons learnt*, prepared for NEMO Tonga and UNDP, February 2019, p. 10; Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Safety and Protection Cluster Tonga Tropical Cyclone Gita: Lessons Learned Workshop Report Outcomes*, 2018, p. 8; Ministry of Health, *Health, Nutrition and WASH Cluster Tropical Cyclone Gita Lessons Learned*, 2018, pp. 8–11; NEMO & Ministry of Infrastructure, *Emergency Shelter and Non Food Items Cluster and Reconstruction Cluster TC Gita 2018 Response Review Workshop Report*, 2018, p. 3. Interviews 12, 22, 47, 49, 50

28 Interview 5

29 Interviews 24, 25

30 Interviews 9, 19, 22, 50

31 Interview 5

32 Interviews 9, 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 46

33 Interview 5

34 SRS 1.3

(SRS) ② – Our humanitarian response was timely and effective

FINDING 2:

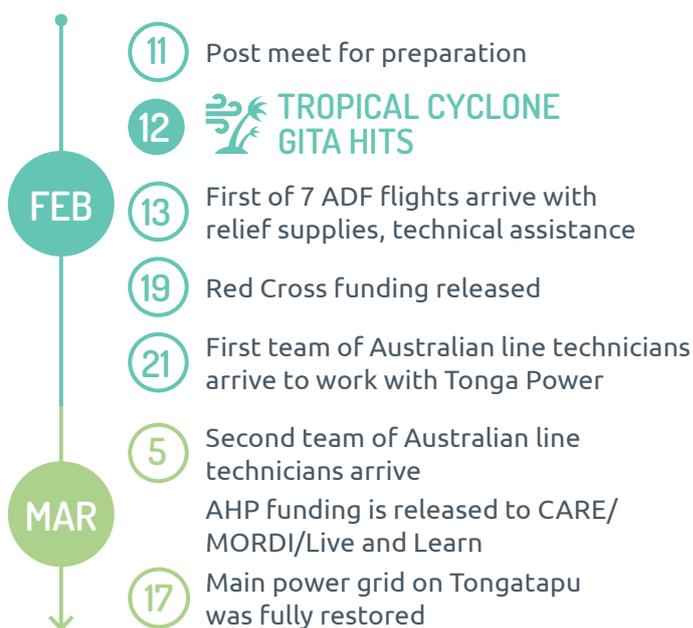
Australia’s response was timely and effective. The ongoing recovery has been delayed and could have built more intentionally on the strengths of the response phase.

1. OUR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE WAS TIMELY³⁵

Australian support in the response phase was timely and highly visible.³⁶ Prior to TC Gita making landfall, Australia was engaging in preparedness planning at post and in Canberra with the Government of Tonga, which meant that support was able to be mobilised quickly. As noted earlier, an RAAF C-17 Globemaster was on the ground with humanitarian supplies and some technical personnel, including a Disaster Assistance Response Team and AUSMAT representatives, within 24 hours of the storm hitting Tonga. In addition, the deployment of electrical technicians to work with Tonga Power Ltd teams and then with New Zealand teams was organised and deployed rapidly, arriving nine days after the cyclone struck.³⁷ This initial speed of provision of supplies and assistance was warranted and addressed needs whilst not overwhelming national systems and processes.³⁸

Support to partners was generally mobilised quickly (Figure 6), especially when pre-existing agreements existed, for example, through regional arrangements such as Pacific Women and the International Planned Parenthood Federation’s (IPPF) SPRINT initiative. TFHA was able to develop and submit a proposal for funding that was approved in less than 24 hours; IPPF transferred funding to TFHA within 48 hours.³⁹ Key partners confirmed that they received funding in a timely manner and the process for reporting was straightforward and not overly burdensome.⁴⁰ Surge clauses in existing development contracts with key national partners could further support timely response.

Figure 6: Timeline of key activities in the response phase



2. RESPONSE OBJECTIVES WERE REALISED AND OUTPUTS WERE DELIVERED AS EXPECTED⁴¹

Australian assistance in the response achieved a great deal and has delivered strong results for affected communities, the Government of Tonga and for DFAT. Australia’s response and recovery package for TC Gita was framed by a whole-of-government mission statement that set out response objectives. Australia’s response largely realised these objectives, which correspond closely to the strategic results statements in the MEF as outlined in this evaluation.

35 SRS 1.2

36 Interviews 4, 5, 12, 15, 25, 50

37 *Tonga Shelter Cluster Lessons Learned Report*, pp. 2, 6

38 Interviews 12, 29

39 Interviews 8, 38

40 Interviews 5, 15, 25, 38

41 SRS 2.2



Reconstruction site for new shed at the Tapuhia Waste Management Facility, part of Australian-funded Nuku'alofa Urban Development Sector Program. Photo: Beth Eggleston

Box 2: DFAT TC Gita Response Objectives

- As a close friend and partner of Tonga we will:
- 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.

The response was also largely aligned with the strategic objectives of DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy,⁴² although some of the guiding principles (for example, being accountable to the communities we seek to assist) could have been strengthened throughout the package.⁴³ See further discussion in section 4.

2.1 PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Response program

Australia's implementing partners have largely delivered effective programs in the response phase. The Australian package employed new modalities and programming to achieve the intended outcomes, such as the public-private sector partnership with Australian electrical companies to provide electrical restoration, the SPRINT program used for the first time in Tonga, and cash assistance to marginalised groups. Australian assistance is likely to have reached a significant proportion of the affected populations on both Tongatapu and 'Eua due to the restoration of electrical power across most communities and provision of generators. Planned activities in program designs for the response were generally implemented, and where this was not the case partners were able to negotiate with DFAT to reprioritise programming to address needs were relevant.⁴⁴ A summary of achievements of the response program is provided below in Figure 7.

42 DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy*, May 2016.

43 These include strengthening international humanitarian action by supporting reform and innovation to ensure a system that is fit for purpose; investing in disaster risk reduction with a particular focus on our region; supporting regional preparedness and response capabilities; and enabling early recovery efforts.

44 Interviews 7, 13, 15, 35, 38

Figure 7 Summary of response achievements

SHELTER

PARTNERS – AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS, CARE, MORDI AND LIVE AND LEARN

- **16,800** individuals received assistance including shelter materials, including tents, tarps and fixing kits
- **3,614** community members in **33** communities trained in building back safer techniques
- Support for the coordination and activities of the Shelter Cluster

LIVELIHOODS

PARTNERS – CARE, MORDI AND LIVE AND LEARN

- **3,263** individuals provided with seedlings and cuttings to enhance food security
- Two nurseries established to support **33** communities in Eua and Tongatapu
- **190** acres of land prepared for community gardens
- **7** women's groups in 'Eua provided with livelihoods support

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

PARTNERS – AUSTRALIAN POWER COMPANIES AND TONGA POWER LTD THROUGH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA

- Deployment of line technicians for restoration of power benefitted approximately **1,327** households, **3** health clinics and **12** schools
- Local contractors supported for debris removal and waste management across Tongatapu
- Support for deploying Tonga line technicians from the outer islands to support power restoration
- Seven generators provided and used for the response connecting **950** households, **6** schools and **3** health clinics

WASH

PARTNERS – CARE, MORDI AND LIVE AND LEARN AND UNFPA

- **3,614** community members in **33** communities trained hygiene awareness and promotion
- **1,544** dignity kits distributed and **456** prepositioned in the Central Pharmacy.

GENDER, PROTECTION AND INCLUSION

PARTNERS – WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S CRISIS CENTRE, CARE/MORDI AND LIVE AND LEARN AND MINISTRY FOR FINANCE AND NATIONAL PLANNING

- Cash top-up payments for **3,700** individuals on the retirement and disability social welfare register
- Psychosocial support provided through additional in-house counsellors at WCCC and support for the establishment of the Psychosocial Support and Resilience Mobile Counselling team
- Establishment of counselling safe space for women and children in Nuku'alofa and establishment of a 'Eua safe space for women and children

HEALTH

PARTNERS – TONGA FAMILY HEALTH CENTRE AND UNFPA

- Support for mobile clinic health outreach teams reaching **4,000** individuals including psychosocial support services
- Deployment of AusMAT health expert to support assessment of health needs
- Sexual and reproductive health services provided to **938** women, men and young people from **95** affected communities across 'Eua, Tongatapu, Euaiki and Atata Islands
- Sexual and reproductive health awareness sessions conducted with **3,949** individuals
- **42** nurses and midwives trained on SGBV issues in emergencies
- Cervical screening provided for the first time in disaster response in Tonga for **410** women
- Psychosocial support training provided to local DPOs
- Provision of **8** reproductive health kits for clinical services

LOGISTICS

PARTNERS – PALLADIUM

- Transported personnel, equipment and relief items to Tonga
- Deployment of DART members to support damage assessments
- Provided support for DFAT operations in Nuku'alofa
- Distributed relief supplies across Tongatapu

Box 3: Tonga Family Health Association SPRINT program



Patient consulting room at the Tonga Family Health Association's clinic. Photo: Beth Eggleston

TFHA delivered sexual and reproductive health programming for the first time in Tonga during disaster response, through the SPRINT program supported by IPPF.⁴⁵ TFHA provided sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, raised awareness of SRH issues, distributed dignity kits and performed non-communicable disease screening. TFHA worked alongside other Australian-funded partners in mobile outreach teams, including with the Ministry of Health and UNFPA. TFHA also undertook cervical cancer screening of women in communities for the first time in Tonga. The program enabled SRH services to be provided to a wider cross-section of the population in Tonga and expanded services to areas that previously lacked access.

45 IPPF and Tonga Family Health Association, *SPRINT Response Final Report*, 2018.

Early recovery programming

Australian-funded response programming supported early recovery activities. For example, power restoration across Tongatapu was an enabling program that strongly supported early recovery – without this, communities across Tongatapu would have been without electricity for a longer period of time, affecting recovery in a range of areas (see section 3).⁴⁶ Similarly, the TRCS shelter activities, and the CARE/MORDI/Live and Learn livelihoods and shelter programming supported early recovery. TRCS received funding for both response and recovery, meaning that the recovery component could build on response work.⁴⁷

Build back better/safer principles and approaches formed important components of the Australia response, supporting longer-term resilience. These approaches were used in programming in the CARE/MORDI partnership and TRCS activities. Partners and communities were aware of these approaches and indicated where they had been important parts of the assistance provided.⁴⁸

Box 4: Early recovery – restoration of power



Line technicians working to restore power in villages across Tongatapu. Photo: DFAT

Programs that had a strong focus on supporting early recovery included a model of deployment of private sector electrical technicians from Essential Energy (NSW), EVO Energy (ACT), NJ Construction (NSW) and Transgrid (NSW) through the AUSASSISTPLAN mechanism managed by Emergency Management Australia.⁴⁹ Line technicians worked closely with Tonga Power Ltd teams, with logistics also being supported by Palladium. This not only provided support for the transition from relief to recovery but was highly effective, visible and timely. In the future this type of deployment of Australian domestic emergency services personnel could be strengthened by increasing preparedness and training in areas relevant to humanitarian response such as protection.⁵⁰

Response and recovery transition effectiveness

To support transition from response to recovery, DFAT integrated early recovery activities in the response phase (such as livelihoods and shelter) and planned for the design of a separate recovery package in March 2018. DFAT also worked closely with the Government of

Tonga and key partners, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), to anticipate and plan for recovery. Despite this, the transition was challenging, for several reasons.

The Tongan government took some time to articulate clear priorities for recovery, which created some confusion amongst donors and key partners. This was due in part to the Government of Tonga's transition from NEMO (under the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information,

⁴⁶ Interviews 2, 9, 15, 40, 50; Christine Ford, *Australia's response to TC Gita: Tonga power package end of mission report*, April 2018.

⁴⁷ Interview 48

⁴⁸ Cluster lessons learned report, p. 5; Interviews 21, 24, 40; Focus group discussion on 'Eua.

⁴⁹ Interviews 25, 47

⁵⁰ Interviews 47, 49

Figure 8: Response and recovery funding breakdown



Figure 9: Response and recovery transition



Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC)) as lead agency during response to the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP) as lead during recovery. In June 2018 the Tongan government developed the *Disaster Recovery Framework* and shared it with partners.⁵¹ The framework provides an outline of the Government of Tonga’s recovery needs and priorities for a three-year period and is a useful guiding document, but was finalised after the development of DFAT’s recovery phase package. DFAT’s annual funding cycles meant that recovery funding needed to be decided on before the end of the 2017-18 financial year and therefore prior to the release of the government’s recovery framework.⁵²

In the absence of Government of Tonga’s recovery framework, Australia developed a Recovery Options paper that articulated potential recovery avenues based on an in-country consultation process and discussed priorities with the government. The final recovery package was chosen from the presented options and was designed to support three partners in four sectors: the WASH sector through Live and Learn, rebuilding of education infrastructure through the World Bank’s Pacific Resilience Project (PREP), waste management sector through the ADB’s Nuku’alofa Urban Development Sector Project (NUDSP), as well as governance through the development of a Central Support Unit to manage ongoing response and recovery funding in the MoFNP, also managed by the World Bank.⁵³

The World Bank PREP project and the ADB NUDSP project were existing DFAT-funded development programs; DFAT sought to leverage and adapt these programs to meet recovery priorities as identified by the Tongan government. The Live and Learn WASH project is a new project, but prior to the TC Gita response, DFAT negotiated with Live and Learn around a proposal for a WASH development program in Tonga. Following the response to the cyclone, Live and Learn re-adapted the proposal for the recovery context. The implementation of the Central Support Unit in the MoFNP commenced in July 2018 (the World Bank had been preparing to do so since before the TC Gita response).

The transition from Australia’s investments in response to recovery was further challenged by the shift in the sectoral focus and commencement of new partnerships. As a result there was a significant disconnect between the response and recovery, in that the response did not build on response sector achievements and partner relationships. Of the eight response partnerships, none was supported to transition response programming with additional funding into the recovery phase. Two of the response partners, Live and Learn and the World Bank, were funded for new projects in new sectors in the recovery phase, and only one of the response sectors, WASH, was supported into the recovery. This is outlined in Figure 9. This disconnect led to some confusion amongst key partners that indicated that they were not aware of Australia’s recovery strategy or objectives or how they built on the response phase.⁵⁴

51 Kingdom of Tonga, *Disaster Recovery Framework*, June 2018.

52 Interviews 5, 22, 47

53 DFAT, *Tropical Cyclone Gita Response and Recovery Package*, February 2019

54 Interviews 4, 6, 35, 37

Whilst it is important to adapt programming based on changing needs, continued needs outlined in the government's *Disaster Recovery Framework* in sectors such as in livelihoods and shelter would have allowed DFAT to identify areas that met needs whilst building on established partnerships and strong programming.⁵⁵

The disconnect between response and recovery was accentuated by the significant delays in the startup of the key programs under the recovery package. The school reconstruction program managed by the World Bank has yet to begin, Live and Learn's WASH program was also delayed, with implementation beginning in early 2019, and the Private Sector Recovery Fund, comprising approximately \$2 million, has not yet commenced. The priorities for this funding are currently being negotiated with the Government of Tonga.⁵⁶ The ADB NUDSP program that supports the Tonga Waste Authority has commenced but has experienced delays in key activities, including rebuilding of sheds and new cells at the Tapuhia landfill site.⁵⁷



Tents still being used as classrooms at schools. Photo: Beth Eggleston

The effectiveness of the recovery program activities could not be assessed in this review because programs had either only recently commenced or not yet begun, but there are strong components to the package that clearly align with government priorities and community needs for recovery. The recovery package as planned supports key objectives identified in the government's *Disaster Recovery Framework*, in particular education infrastructure and the commerce and industry sectors. The package also supports the development of a Central Support Unit in the MoFNP and continues the investment in the Government of Tonga as a partner across both the response and recovery phases. Whilst

not traditionally a recovery component, support for the Central Support Unit in the MoFNP to manage recovery funding and invest in their ability to scale up and manage ongoing development funding is important. In particular, this may enable Australia to provide additional budget support to the Government of Tonga in disaster response in the future.⁵⁸

Smoother transition from response to recovery phase could have been supported in several ways. Firstly, a phased approach to the transition – short, medium and long term – would ensure that ongoing program activities bridge the phases. Medium-term transition funding would build on the early recovery components that had been integrated into the response phase. In future responses, it might also be useful to consider the potential to transition some of the response partnerships into recovery partnerships, especially where the start-up phase for new contracts and relationships can be both time-consuming and costly.

Longer-term planning would improve support for disaster recovery in Tonga. Multi-year funding for recovery programming would enable better planning and predictability and maximise impact of recovery programs.⁵⁹ For large-scale recovery projects involving infrastructure procurement, the capacity of multilateral institutions in Tonga could be reviewed in light of the current delays, including managing DFAT and partner expectations about realistic timeframes for infrastructure recovery. Australia is also considering the use of prefabricated buildings in the Pacific for disaster response, such as the Rapid Acceleration through Prefabricated Infrastructure Deployment (RAPID) initiative. This initiative could be trialled in Tonga, where structural weaknesses in schools, houses and other buildings are likely to cause problems during future disasters.⁶⁰

RECOMMENDATION 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.

55 Kingdom of Tonga, *Disaster Recovery Framework*, June 2018, p. 10.

56 DFAT, *Australia's Tropical Cyclone Gita Response and Recovery Package*, 5 February 2019, Interview 20

57 Interview 13

58 Interviews 1, 9, 20, 50,

59 Interview 47

60 Interviews 47, 50

(SRS) ③ – Our humanitarian response was efficient and well managed

FINDING 3:

Implementing partners have run efficient programs; efficiencies were maximised by leveraging existing development programs.

1. OUTPUTS WERE DELIVERED EFFICIENTLY⁶¹

Efficiencies by partners

Australian assistance in the TC Gita response delivered efficient programs delivered through an appropriate range of partners, modalities and sectors.⁶² This included prioritising support for existing development partners with the knowledge and expertise to effectively contribute to a response, and funding new partners and programs to address needs where existing capacity did not exist. Staff at post made informed decisions about which partners could upscale and deliver value for money.

In particular, support for the restoration of power across Tongatapu through deploying Australian line technicians

demonstrated return on investment, with power restored across Tongatapu and systems upgraded and linked in with the current Nuku'alofa Upgrade project. This project also demonstrated the effectiveness of public-private partnerships in disaster response, and established relationships and a precedent for future disaster scenarios in the Pacific. The restoration of electrical power and its visibility demonstrated value for money in terms of reach across the island of Tongatapu with a population of over 75,000 people that had impact beyond provision of lighting, including supporting small businesses to continue operating, maintaining critical infrastructure, improving the safety of affected populations, and supporting the functioning of health centres and clinics. It also supported the full restoration of power across the island by 27 March, a month earlier than the estimated restoration date without this assistance.⁶³ Despite the modest size of the investment (\$648,000), the impact and reach of this project across the island enabled and supported both response and early recovery activities, and future responses through the provision of generators to NEMO.⁶⁴

Australian-funded partners collaborated to deliver assistance that wouldn't have been possible otherwise, particularly through the mobile health outreach teams, in which TFHA and the UNFPA worked with the Ministry of Health across affected communities. This reduced duplication, enhanced coordination and leveraged impact, because government and civil society provided comprehensive service through joint teams.

Using prepositioned relief supplies maximised efficiencies through UNFPA's Regional Prepositioning Initiative. Supplies from the Brisbane warehouse were transported by the ADF and those from Suva transported by the French Navy, with support from Palladium on logistics.⁶⁵ Palladium supported supply chain efficiency through warehouse management, employing local contractors for debris removal, aid distribution and staff transport.⁶⁶



Relief supplies as part of UNFPA hygiene kits.
Photo: Beth Eggleston

61 SRS 3.1

62 Interviews 6, 7, 21, 24, 25, 40

63 Christine Ford, *Australia's response to TC Gita: Tonga power package end of mission report*, April 2018.

64 Interviews 4, 14, 15, 47.

65 UNFPA, *Report on the distribution of supplies in response to TC Gita in Tonga and Fiji*, May 2018, p. 2

66 DFAT, *After action Review: Tropical Cyclone Gita, Nuku'alofa Post*; Interview 22

“This response really highlighted the benefits of regionally prepositioning for the Pacific region; as without prepositioned supplies it would have taken more than a month for all the supplies to arrive and cost an additional almost \$40,000 on airfreight.”⁶⁷

Leveraging existing development programs

The effective use of development partners that were able to scale up operations quickly was also a key efficiency. It avoided expensive startup costs associated with having to establish a presence in context or new community connections. National partners such as MORDI, leveraged through the CARE/MORDI partnership, are a particularly good example of this, being already fully operational with functioning supply chains and well developed and trusting relationships with affected communities. National partners also supported efficiencies because they were able to source goods at reduced rates through networks and relationships to reduce supplier and distribution costs where international agencies could not.⁶⁸ The existing Outer Island Renewable Energy Project, funded by DFAT through ADB, deployed staff and materials from the outer islands to Tongatapu to support the restoration of electrical systems, rather than flying in additional materials, as outlined above.

In disaster responses in the Pacific there is great value in building response programs that leverage strengths within the existing development portfolio, particularly in Tonga, where there is a small pool of development and humanitarian partners. DFAT should continue to build on this approach of leveraging the strengths of development partners in response. Ongoing development programming includes one initiative that supports humanitarian response surge capacity, the

Tonga Health Sector Support program. DFAT could consider implementing this approach more widely in other ongoing development programs to enable streamlining of surge funding or approaches during a response.

It was not possible to assess the value for money of recovery programs, such as the World Bank-managed PREP program for the reconstruction of schools and the Live and Learn WASH program, due to delayed commencement of programs.⁶⁹

Efficiencies by DFAT

DFAT supported the response phase with existing staff at post and deployment of CRT staff in the initial phase, and subsequently invested in an Australia-based (A-based) position at post to manage the ongoing response and recovery phases. Staff at post had a strong understanding of context, and consequently were able to make informed decisions about which partners were able to upscale and could deliver effective and efficient programs in context. Efficiencies were maximised by post’s strong relationships with existing partners and ability to discuss planning, design and quality issues. Resourcing post to manage the overall response and recovery package through the A-based position enabled the assistance to be managed well in country, and should be replicated in future large-scale responses in the Pacific.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

67 UNFPA Report for DFAT, p. 2

68 CARE and Humanitarian Advisory Group, *Tropical Cyclone Gita Response Program Evaluation*, November 2018

69 Interview 21

(SRS) ④ – Our humanitarian response engaged with and was accountable to affected communities and vulnerable people

FINDING 4:

Engagement with and accountability to affected populations and vulnerable groups could be improved.

1. ACCOUNTABILITY AND FEEDBACK PROCESSES⁷⁰

“An overall systematic cluster or response-wide system for understanding community views of the response was not available... vulnerable groups were ineffectively reached due to inefficient mechanisms for dissemination of information and gathering of needs data.” (Shelter Cluster Lessons Learned Report)⁷¹

DFAT prioritises accountability to affected populations in its Humanitarian Strategy.⁷² As a result, Australia intentionally supported initiatives to establish accountability mechanisms, such as a national complaints mechanism that the Safety and Protection Cluster Coordinator set up well into the recovery phase.⁷³ Despite this, accountability to affected populations was not consistently strong across the response or the Australian-funded package. Communities were unclear about processes, including assessment, distribution and feedback avenues.⁷⁴ Some agencies operated their own feedback and complaints mechanisms, but there was no overall, systematic cluster or response-wide system in the response phase for understanding community views of the response or obtaining feedback. In particular, there were few ways to receive feedback from vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, women, and marginalised groups such as the leiti population.⁷⁵ Implementing partners recognised that this component of programming needs improvement, but also noted that doing so comprehensively requires specific technical support and funding.⁷⁶

Protection, gender and inclusion⁷⁷

DFAT’s Humanitarian Strategy outlines specific strategic objectives around humanitarian protection in response.⁷⁸ The package provided support for humanitarian protection issues, including gender equality, protection and disability inclusion, highlighted through both standalone programs and mainstreaming. This included support to existing partners, such as the WCCC, to provide psychosocial support to women and children, UNFPA to provide deployment and replenishment of SRH commodities,⁷⁹ and TFHA to undertake SPRINT activities. Disability inclusion was mainstreamed across some programs, including the CARE/MORDI/Live and Learn partnership.

70 SRS 4.4

71 Shelter Cluster Lessons learned report, Shelter Cluster Pacific & IFRC, 2018

72 Objective 1, Key result 2: Assistance is principled, accountability and protects the most vulnerable in humanitarian crises

73 Interview 10

74 Focus group discussion; Interview 24, 25, 10; CARE and Humanitarian Advisory Group, *Tropical Cyclone Gita Response Program Evaluation*, November 2018, p. 19.

75 For more information about the leiti community in Tonga see: <http://www.tongaleitis.org>

76 Interviews 24, 10, 11, 37

77 SRS 4.3

78 pp. 15–31; p. 24

79 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australia’s Tropical Cyclone Gita Response and Recovery Package*, 5 February 2019



Assistance could have been better aligned with the *Australian-funded programming through CARE/MORDI/Live & Learn programming for addressing needs of people with disabilities on 'Eua*. Photo: Beth Eggleston

Australian aid program's *Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework* and objectives articulated in the Humanitarian Strategy, notably disability inclusiveness and protection. Dedicated protection, gender and inclusion programs outside of the \$500,000 cash top-up program for people with disabilities and the elderly received a very small proportion of total funding (1 per cent).⁸⁰ Whilst Australia supports several disability programs as part of its development aid, including the Tonga Skills for Inclusive Economic Growth program, support for standalone disability programming could have been strengthened in the response. Australia could consider providing funding or working with a disabled persons organisation (DPO) to support standalone disability response programs. There is also an opportunity to draw on the resources and expertise of the regional Pacific Disability Forum.

DFAT funded a top-up welfare payment of TOP 225 per person for 3,682 existing recipients of the Tonga National Retirement Scheme and the Disability Scheme.⁸¹ This followed recommendations to increase the use of cash-based assistance, as highlighted in other evaluations and the work undertaken in Fiji after Cyclone Winston, as well as the Humanitarian Strategy.⁸² The package was direct funding for the Tongan Government to provide additional support for highly vulnerable people. The World Bank is working with the Tonga Department of Statistics on an evaluation of the impact of the cash top-up payments. It was a highly visible and needed component of Australian assistance, but consideration of protection risks could be improved, including potentially funding and requiring a protection risk assessment as part of the design process.⁸³

Partners did not consistently set up robust feedback mechanisms, and where they existed, did not consistently use feedback in order to adapt programs based on information from communities. Some partners did prioritise engagement with vulnerable groups, but engagement was not consistent across programs.

DFAT should continue to prioritise engagement with affected populations in design documents and conversations with partners and support adequate resourcing of accountability mechanisms, in support of Core Humanitarian Standard 4 (*humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback*). This could include both verbal and non-verbal feedback mechanisms, ensuring the roles of partners in relation to the mechanism is clear, and ensuring reports are acted upon quickly. DFAT should encourage partners to include feedback and accountability mechanisms in program design and seek evidence of how this information has been used to inform programming. This includes coordination with other actors as appropriate at the national level on accountability and complaints mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

DFAT should support partners to design and develop strong accountability mechanisms by resourcing their development and implementation.

80 This includes CARE/MORDI's gender component and the funding for gender and protection WCCC.

81 Letter from Australia Head of Mission to MFNP re one-off budget support payment

82 Government of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Humanitarian Strategy*, May 2016, Government of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Humanitarian Assistance in the Pacific: An evaluation of the effectiveness of Australia's response to cyclone Pam*, February 2017; Government of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, October 2017, *Tropical Cyclone Winston Education Response Evaluation*

83 Interview 10

(SRS) ⑤ – Our humanitarian response reinforced national and local leadership and capacity as much as possible and engaged international actors when necessary

FINDING 5:

Australia's response and recovery package actively supported national leadership and reinforced the national response systems and structures.

1. NATIONAL RESPONSE AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS WERE REINFORCED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE⁸⁴

In recent years there has been increased focus on how international engagement in disaster response can better support national leadership. This has been influenced by recent responses in the Pacific such as the ongoing Ambae Island response in Vanuatu, the response to Cyclone Winston in Fiji (2016) and the response to Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu (2015).

For Australia, this focus is reflected in DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy (2016) and the development of the Joint MEF for the Pacific that includes specific objectives for evaluating how Australia's assistance has supported national priorities and reinforced national systems and structures. Although the scale of the response to the TC Gita disaster was smaller than other recent responses, the way Australia engaged in the response reflects this shift to an increased focus on

localisation and builds on some of the learning and recommendations detailed in other recent evaluations.⁸⁵

Australian support reinforced national response and coordination mechanisms through working with the Government of Tonga's systems and structures and other national partners to address nationally identified needs and priorities,⁸⁶ supporting commitments outlined in the Humanitarian Strategy.⁸⁷ There was a perception amongst many stakeholders that Australia and other international actors have collectively shifted to better support and tailor response to national and local requirements, priorities and leadership.⁸⁸ This approach should be replicated in future responses.

Engagement with and support to national coordination mechanisms, such as the clusters and NEMO, largely reinforced existing systems, and did not take over despite coordination being a key challenge in the response.⁸⁹ Despite political pressure to trigger large-scale deployment of the ADF and AUSMAT team, the international response was undertaken at an appropriate scale. A strategic decision was made to deploy a small number of personnel from the DART, ADF and AUSMAT mechanisms in advance of comprehensive needs assessments being undertaken to ensure resources were available. These personnel were kept in-country no longer than was needed.

Funding

The majority of funding to national partners (government and non-government) was provided either directly, or as directly as possible through one transaction layer.⁹⁰ Figure 10 shows the degree of direct funding in the response. Most implementing partners were government, national NGOs and private sector bodies. For the most part, Australian partners worked through national organisations rather than directly implementing programming without partnering. Providing funding directly to the Government of Tonga for cash top-up payments was another means of supporting their priorities. Many stakeholders identified

84 SRS 5.1 and 5.2

85 Government of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Humanitarian Assistance in the Pacific: An evaluation of the effectiveness of Australia's response to cyclone Pam*, February 2017 <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/cyclone-pam-evaluation.pdf>, Recommendations 5, 6, 8, 9, 10; Government of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, October 2017, *Tropical Cyclone Winston Education Response Evaluation*, <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/fiji-tc-winston-education-response-evaluation.aspx>, Recommendations 3, 4, 5

86 Interviews 33, 46, 49, 50

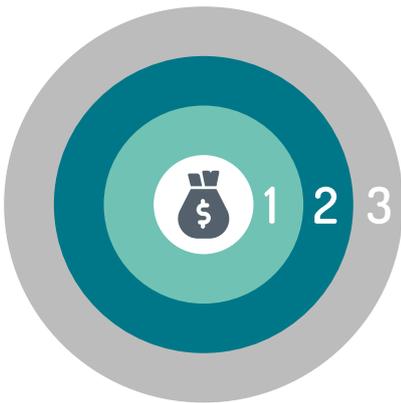
87 Humanitarian Strategy: commitment to support preparedness and effective response by reinforcing local capacities during a response, ensuring that they are not marginalised by international actors arriving with their own staff, systems and priorities. DFAT, *Humanitarian Strategy*, 2016, 15

88 Interviews 49, 50

89 Tonkin & Taylor International Ltd, *TC Gita Emergency Preparedness and Response: A comprehensive review and lessons learnt*, prepared for NEMO Tonga and UNDP, February 2019

90 Partner funding agreements

Figure 10: Funding breakdown



- 1 Direct - Government of Tonga
- 2 Direct as possible - Tonga Family Health Association and Women and Children’s Crisis Centre. Allocated 100% of funding amount through regional /international partners
- 3 Direct as possible -Tonga Red Cross Society, MORDI, Live and Learn, Tonga Waste Ltd, Tonga Power Ltd, Local businesses. Allocated through international partners.

that DFAT was very consultative and engaged both government and partners in the response funding process.⁹¹

Strengthening the institutional capacity of national and local partners to receive direct funding, including conducting due diligence processes as part of preparedness, was highlighted as important by several stakeholders.⁹² Developing an approach to cover core costs and administrative costs of national partners in response would also be beneficial. In the future, to track funding to local and national actors, DFAT can consider approaches for including requirements for funding amounts to local and national partners by international partners to be provided in program proposals and reporting.

In the future, the MEF localisation data and indicators could be used to monitor localisation commitments in real time. This would mean enhancing understanding of the MEF among DFAT staff and partners in advance and making sure data collection tools are fit for purpose. An effective way to do this is to work with civil society umbrella bodies to reach current and potential future partners through joint training and policy development initiatives.

In the future DFAT could strengthen support for national leadership and systems by continuing to invest in the institutional capacity of national and local government and non-government partners to receive funding support. This could include increased direct funding to the Tongan government to enable support for national priorities and systems in future

responses. For national non-government partners, this could include support for organisational system strengthening and conducting due diligence processes prior to responses. It could also include increasing understanding of other national actors with response capacity, and identifying these in Crisis Action Plans as potential partners through disaster planning processes. In the event that these processes are successful, DFAT could look to increase the proportion of direct funding to national partners. In the future, DFAT can also use the localisation monitoring indicators in the MEF in real time to gather data on support to national government and funding decisions.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

DFAT should continue to support national leadership and capacity in future responses by:

- 1.3. Strengthening the institutional capacity of national and local partners to receive direct funding, including conducting due diligence processes as part of preparedness
- 1.4. Considering more direct funding, including administrative costs, for national partners
- 1.5. Using the localisation approaches and tools in the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation framework to inform decision-making

91 Interviews 6, 19, 21, 25

92 Interviews 8, 10, 11, 18, 40



ADF personnel coordinating with DFAT staff in the response. Photo: DFAT.

(SRS) ⑥ – Our humanitarian response was coordinated and complementary

FINDING 6:

Australia’s assistance was complementary and coordinated with the Government of Tonga and external actors. Better preparedness could have further enhanced coordination efforts.

1. OUR RESPONSE WAS WELL COORDINATED AND COMPLEMENTARY WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTORS⁹³

The Government of Tonga and other partners highlighted that Australia and other international donors coordinated well during the response.⁹⁴ Coordination through the France, Australia and New Zealand (FRANZ) trilateral arrangement, chaired at the time by Australia, minimised duplication of information sharing and priorities for Australia, New Zealand and the Government of Tonga.⁹⁵ The FRANZ partners agreed that the Government of Tonga would use one channel of communication to FRANZ partners to request support. In particular, Australia’s coordination with New Zealand was highlighted as being very effective, involving information sharing and daily meetings, in particular the

⁹³ SRS 6.1

⁹⁴ Interviews 12, 19, 21, 22, 47, 49

⁹⁵ Interviews 12, 21, 22, 49

dual use of the 'Australia Assists' position embedded in NEMO, which also facilitated information sharing with other donors.⁹⁶ Australia also coordinated through other international actors like UN OCHA and the Pacific Humanitarian Team.⁹⁷

Daily donor coordination meetings chaired by the Minister of MEIDECC in the relief phase with donors including Australia, New Zealand, the World Bank and ADB enabled the Government of Tonga to provide information and requests for assistance in one forum.⁹⁸ Ongoing international coordination is supported by monthly donor meetings established prior to TC Gita in November 2017. New Zealand and Australia have also agreed to provide MEIDECC with a list of capabilities that could be utilised in the case of an emergency.⁹⁹

Coordination with the Government of Tonga

The response to TC Gita was the first time the national cluster system had been used in Tonga in a large-scale disaster response, and unsurprisingly there was some confusion about roles and responsibilities and a lack of standard operating procedures and terms of reference.¹⁰⁰ Several stakeholders reported that too many international personnel were deployed into the clusters, undermining the clusters being locally led.¹⁰¹ Coordination at a subnational level was challenging; Town and District Officers were given a lot of responsibility for distribution and decision-making in communities, which caused some confusion and lack of transparency about how and why relief supplies were distributed.¹⁰² There remain ongoing challenges for Tonga in developing and using a fit-for-purpose national coordination architecture for disaster response, including adapting or transforming the existing cluster system. International actors such as Australia can play a role in supporting the development and implementation of a system that reflects national needs.

Australian and Tongan government planning outside of cyclone season could be enhanced to improve understanding of the assistance or approaches that could be employed in future disaster responses based on existing capabilities and programs.¹⁰³ Australia and New Zealand have developed and shared a Menu of Offshore Deployment Capabilities for Disaster Response in the Pacific, which is an important step and will facilitate strengthened planning. This Menu could be used to inform broader discussions with key partners about Australia's potential approaches, capabilities, resources and assets in disaster response. This would enable partners to understand how Australia is positioned to support a response prior to any disaster, streamline the Government of Tonga's requests for assistance, expedite targeting of assistance, and minimise duplication by enhancing other key donors' awareness of Australian capabilities.¹⁰⁴

RECOMMENDATION 6:

DFAT should build on positive coordination with 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 support coordination in a response.

96 Interviews 12, 19

97 Interview 49

98 Interviews 1, 4, 6, 21

99 Interview 21

100 Interview 49

101 Interviews 5, 10, 38

102 Interview 50; CARE and Humanitarian Advisory Group, *Tropical Cyclone Gita Response Program Evaluation*, November 2018, p. 17.

103 Interview 10

104 Interview 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

The TC Gita response delivered strong program outcomes. Many of the evaluation recommendations relate to replicating good practice that was evident in the response package, and, in particular, emphasise the value of Australia's approach to supporting national priorities. Some recommendations identify areas for improvement or change in disaster recovery that are relevant for future response and recovery in Tonga and the Pacific region more broadly.

The following identifies the key evaluation recommendations linked to the associated findings.

STRATEGIC RESULTS STATEMENT (SRS)

SRS ① — Our humanitarian response was appropriate and relevant

FINDING 1:

Australia's humanitarian assistance was largely appropriate.

- 1.1. Australia engaged at a scale that respected and supported national leadership and built on existing programming and partnerships. Assistance was aligned with the Tongan Government's Response Plan priorities and identified needs.
- 1.2. Appropriateness of assistance was undermined across the sector by poor information management.

RECOMMENDATION 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. Australia could improve the appropriateness of future responses in Tonga by strengthening information management processes prior to and during humanitarian responses.

SRS ② — Our humanitarian response was timely and effective

FINDING 2:

Australia's response was timely and effective. The ongoing recovery has been delayed, and could have built more intentionally on the strengths of the response phase.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

SRS 3 — Our humanitarian response was efficient and well managed

FINDING 3:

Implementing partners have run efficient programs; efficiencies were maximised by leveraging existing development programs.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

SRS 4 — Our humanitarian response engaged with and was accountable to affected communities and vulnerable people

FINDING 4:

Engagement with and accountability to affected populations and vulnerable groups could be improved.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

DFAT should support partners to design and develop strong accountability mechanisms by resourcing their development and implementation.

SRS 5. — Our humanitarian response reinforced national and local leadership and capacity as much as possible and engaged international actors when necessary

FINDING 5:

Australia's response and recovery package actively supported national leadership and reinforced the national response systems and structures.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

DFAT should continue to support national leadership and capacity in future responses by:

- 5.1. Strengthening the institutional capacity of national and local partners to receive direct funding, including conducting due diligence processes as part of preparedness
- 5.2. Considering more direct funding, including administrative costs, for national partners
- 5.3. Using the localisation approaches and tools in the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation framework to inform decision-making.

SRS 6. — Our humanitarian response was coordinated and complementary

FINDING 6:

Australia's assistance was complementary and coordinated with the Government of Tonga and external actors. Better preparedness could have further enhanced coordination efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

ANNEX ONE: EVALUATION MATRIX

The following matrix outlines the data source, collection method and the relevant tool for each key evaluation question.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCE	COLLECTION METHOD	TOOL
1. Was Australia's relief and recovery package appropriate and relevant?			
a) To what extent did the package address identified needs and priorities?	DFAT, Partners, Affected communities	Key Informant Interviews (KII), Document Review (DR)	Interview guide–DFAT (IG-DFAT) Interview guide – Government of Tonga (GoT)
b) How adequate was the information available for planning and programming purposes? To what extent were decisions based on assessed needs?	DFAT, Partners	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, Interview guide–Partners (IG-Partners)
c) How responsive was Australian assistance to changing needs and to capacities, risks, opportunities and feedback from monitoring and from affected persons?	DFAT, Partners	KII, DR	IG-DFAT
d) How did the package address 'build back better' principles and strengthen longer-term resilience?	Affected communities	FGD	IG-partners, FGD Guide
e) How well did the package address humanitarian protection issues, including gender equality and disability inclusion?	DFAT, Partners, Affected communities, DPOs, Women's organisations	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners
f) To what extent was out humanitarian response founded on, and aligned with, existing development activities?	DFAT, Partners, Affected communities	KII, DR, FGD	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners, FGDG
2. Was Australia's package of assistance timely and effective?			
a) How well were the intended results achieved within the agreed timeframes?	DFAT, Partners	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners
b) Was assistance provided in accordance with the guiding principles of DFAT's humanitarian strategy and relevant international commitments, and to the satisfaction of affected populations?	DFAT, Partners, Affected communities	KII, DR, FGD	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners, FGDG

3. Was Australia's package of assistance efficient and well-managed?				
a)	How well did the response procedures and communications function, including with implementing partners and the public?	DFAT, Partners	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners
b)	How efficiently were outputs delivered, including with response to value for money?	DFAT, Partners	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners
4. How did the package of assistance reinforce national Government of Tonga and local Tongan leadership and capacity?				
a)	How well did we reinforce the Government of Tonga's national response mechanisms, including supporting the draft Disaster Recovery Framework?	DFAT, Partners, Government of Tonga	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners, IG-GoT
b)	To what extent did the response support national and local leadership initiatives?	DFAT, Partners	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners
c)	What proportion of response funding went directly or indirectly (i.e. through one transaction layer) to local and national partners?	DFAT, Partners	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners
5. Was the package of assistance coordinated and complementary?				
a)	How effective was coordination with external partners (Government of Tonga, other donors, including through the FRANZ mechanism, UN agencies, multilateral development banks, international NGOs, local NGOs and civil-society)? What enabled/constrained this coordination?	DFAT, Partners, other donors	KII, DR	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners, IG-GoT
6. Did the package of assistance engage affected communities and vulnerable groups?				
a)	How effectively did DFAT and delivery partners communicate intentions, rights and entitlements to all persons who were offered assistance and/or protection?	DFAT, Partners, Affected communities	KII, DR, FGD	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners, IG-GoT, FGDG
b)	How did the response promote accountability to affected populations (including mechanisms to receive feedback, report action taken in response to feedback, and enable participation of communities and groups in decision-making)?	DFAT, Partners, Affected communities	KII, DR, FGD	IG-DFAT, IG-Partners, FGDG
c)	To what extent did the response engage stakeholders in strengthening preparedness and resilience?	DFAT, Partners, Affected communities	KII, DR, FGD	G-DFAT, IG-Partners, FGDG

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