

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Between 9 and 14 February, Tropical Cyclone (TC) Gita brought damaging winds, storm surges and rain to Samoa, Tonga and Fiji.
- As the Cluster Lead Agency for Health in the Pacific, WHO has supported the development of the Tonga Health, Nutrition and WASH Cluster Response Plan, deployed four staff to Tonga, and dispatched emergency supplies. WHO is also supporting the mental health and psychosocial response in Tonga through the training of nurses and counsellors.
- At the request of the Ministry of Health of Samoa, WHO dispatched emergency Health and WASH supplies.



### SITUATION

- Between 9 and 14 February, TC Gita brought damaging winds, storm surges and rain to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.
- In Samoa, TC Gita brought heavy rain and flooding. No casualties were reported. However, houses and infrastructure were damaged and power and water supply was interrupted.
- In Tonga, TC Gita impacted the islands of Tongatapu and 'Eua as a Category 4 storm. Destructive winds up to 278kph were recorded, as well as storm surges and heavy rain, affecting approximately 80,000 people. One fatality was recorded, several people were injured, and approximately 4,500 people took shelter in evacuation centers. There was significant damage to housing and infrastructure, and interruption of power and water supplies.
- Tonga was already responding to a dengue outbreak prior to TC Gita striking, making post-disaster infectious disease surveillance and response an urgent priority.
- In Fiji, TC Gita impacted the Southern Lau island group and Kadavu Island as a Category 4. The islands of Ono-i-Lau and Vatoa, with a combined estimated population of 627 people, were most severely affected, with damage to housing and crops but no casualties reported.

## WHO RESPONSE

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- To date, WHO has allocated over USD 100,000 to the Tropical Cyclone Gita response efforts across the Pacific, including deployment of technical and support staff, delivery of emergency supplies, and the activation of emergency outbreak surveillance and response capacity.
- WHO, as Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) Health Cluster lead, coordinated preparedness activities with co-lead UNICEF and Cluster partners prior to TC Gita's arrival. This included identifying human resources and material assets that could be deployed on request.
- WHO participated in initial health facility assessments and supported the development of the Health, Nutrition and WASH Cluster Response Plan in Tonga. Water and power were identified as high priority interventions.
- WHO deployed a Surveillance Officer to Tonga to support the Ministry of Health in implementing the Early Warning, Alert and Response System (EWARS) to detect and respond to outbreaks of infectious disease, including dengue fever, which was already affecting Tonga prior to TC Gita's impact and is a disease under enhanced surveillance.
- WHO deployed 'EWARS in a Box' which contains all the mobile equipment needed to establish surveillance and response activities when internet and/or electricity is unreliable to support post-disaster event-based and syndromic surveillance activities in affected areas.
- At the request of the Ministry of Health, WHO deployed emergency supplies to Tonga, including: water purification tablets, jerry cans, water quality testing kits, bed nets, a range of vector control supplies and equipment, and rapid diagnostic tests for dengue fever and rotavirus.
- In partnership with Tonga Ministry of Health, WHO has coordinated a telecommunications provider to disseminate 240,000 bulk text messages over four weeks to affected communities (in Tongan & English language) on food safety, WASH, vector-borne diseases, non-communicable diseases, breastfeeding and psychosocial support. Messaging will be updated over the four-week period, tailored to arising issues and needs, and reaching over 70% of mobile users in the country.
- WHO and UNICEF co-organized a workshop on mental health and psychosocial support and trained nurses and counselors on psychological first aid.
- WHO deployed emergency supplies to Samoa at the request of the Ministry of Health, including 80,000 water purification tablets, personal protective equipment, vector control supplies and equipment and dengue rapid diagnostic kits.

## FUNDING

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- WHO's response to Cyclone Gita in Tonga to date has been funded from the Organization's Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE). WHO wishes to thank all those donors who have provided funding for the CFE.