

DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN THE KINGDOM OF TONGA

KINGDOM OF TONGA

- ✘ Consist of 171 islands where only 96 islands that are inhabited.
- ✘ The capital city is Nuku'alofa and is located on the main island of Tongatapu where more than two thirds of Tonga's population of about 12,000 live.
- ✘ Total land area is about 748 square km.
- ✘ Located just below the Tropic of Capricorn in the Pacific, west of the International Dateline (longitude 173-177°W) and around 2000km east of Australia.
- ✘ The time in Tonga is 13 hours ahead of GMT.

NATURE OF DISASTERS AND THEIR SOCIO ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- ✘ Two common disasters in Tonga are cyclones and earthquakes.
- ✘ Tonga a country with many islands lies within the South Pacific notorious cyclone belt and has experienced many devastating events over the years such as:
 - Cyclone Isaac in 1982 which crippled the whole island group of Tonga and
 - Tropical Cyclone Waka which struck Tonga on December of 2001. The damaged caused was estimated to about T\$104.2 millions and was confined to infrastructure, houses and schools.

NATURE OF DISASTERS CONT'D

- ✘ Tonga is also prone to earth quakes and has recorded very high shocks in the South Pacific islands so far.
- ✘ We've had occasional tornadoes but not as severe as the cyclone effects.
- ✘ There is only one active volcano at the moment but it was since 1946 that this volcano erupted which led to an evacuation of the whole island but a few had returned back to live. However, we've had two minor eruptions at sea and had formed small volcanic islands but had slowly disappeared.
- ✘ Erosion of land due to sea level rise is a big threat to the islands of Tonga since they are very low and small.

SOCIO ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- ✘ Natural disasters that Tonga had experienced has caused extensive damages to the island group creating hardship and temporarily displacement of many families as houses were destroyed or seriously damaged.
- ✘ Food supply was also affected in the affected islands. Affected population needed food aid for approximately 6 months while recovering.
- ✘ Extensive damages were also caused to cash crops such as vanilla, kava etc.
- ✘ Fruit bearing trees were also uprooted.

SOCIO ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- ✘ Water supply, electricity and communications are usually severely damaged.
- ✘ Electricity and communications affected due to fallen power poles and broken electric lines.
- ✘ The water supply system also affected since it works with electric pumps.
- ✘ In smaller islands where they only have water tanks as their main water source, would be affected for a long time if the house and/or water tanks are damaged

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF TELECOMMUNICATION/ICTS

- ✘ The challenges of telecommunication and icts is a current issue for Tonga
- ✘ Radio Tonga (AM broadcasting station) was the only means of communication between the main island and smaller islands in time of disasters.
- ✘ There is a need to strengthen the capacity of National Disaster Preparedness Committee especially to reach the outer islands during times of disaster.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGE CONT'D

- ✘ There is also a need to develop appropriate and effective measures to address Tonga's Vulnerability to climate change.
- ✘ Weak meteorological capabilities need more efficient technology for weather forecasting to give timely warnings of hazards.

EXISTENCE OF POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

- ✘ There has been policies and regulations developed for disaster management in Tonga
- ✘ Disaster management was one of the major issues addressed in the development of SDP8

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION PLANS AND SOLUTIONS

- ✘ Developing a disaster preparedness plan to sequence the activities and responsibilities of each participant
- ✘ Developing an effective forecasting system
- ✘ Developing warning and evacuation procedures for people and areas threatened by floods, tsunami etc
- ✘ Training first aid and trauma care and maintaining stocks of necessary medical supplies

RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

- ✘ Establishing an emergency communication system as well as public service messages regarding evacuation, health, safety and security.
- ✘ An awareness program for the existence of a disaster threat and of basic disaster mitigation. The occurrence of a disaster is a critical time and the response must be quick and complete to issues such as:
 - evacuation
 - search and rescue
 - medical assistance

RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

- disaster assessment
- provision of short term food and water supplies
- water purification
- repair and reconstruction of infrastructure, houses etc.
- assistance to recovery of agriculture, small businesses and institutions etc.
- ✘ A common VHF and HF frequencies for disaster purposes had been assigned and need to be emphasized
- ✘ Tsunami committee had requested to Government that the AM broadcasting operate 24 hours
- ✘ More awareness programs to public should be emphasized more on TV, Radio broadcasting, inter school essay or quiz competition etc.

THE END

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