



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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FOREWORD

The year 2023 was a challenging yet transformative period for the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS), as we continued our recovery efforts following the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami. These challenges became opportunities for growth—strengthening our capacity and improving our ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

Throughout the year, TRCS expanded the use of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) to reach affected communities. This approach helped fill critical gaps in recovery, particularly in areas such as livelihoods, WASH, and non-food items. We recognize the importance of investing further in this modality to support future operations.

Our work was made possible through the continued support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and our partners. While we acknowledge the valuable assistance provided, we also experienced delays due to financial and administrative processes that impacted the smooth implementation of the Tonga Appeal.

At the same time, our headquarters faced ongoing infrastructure challenges. During heavy rains, flooding in the office premises placed staff, volunteers, and assets at risk—hindering our ability to respond efficiently. As climate-related disasters become more frequent and intense, addressing these vulnerabilities is critical to our preparedness and resilience.

In response, TRCS invested in building the capacity of staff and volunteers, including at the branch level. Strengthening our branches ensures that we remain connected to communities and responsive to their unique needs. It also lays the foundation for local fundraising efforts, despite the broader economic challenges.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Governing Board, our dedicated staff, and our committed volunteers for their tireless efforts in advancing the mission and vision of the Tonga Red Cross Society. Your service to the people of Tonga is deeply valued.

Malo 'aupito



Sione
Taumoefolau
Secretary General
Tonga Red Cross
Society

PURPOSE



Tonga Red Cross Society is one of 191 National Society's around the globe, united by a shared commitment to alleviate and prevent human suffering. This mission is guided by our Strategic Plan 2022-2026, with the supported by the Red Cross Red Crescent movement, and our local and international partners. These collaborations have enabled the delivery of locally-led initiatives and strengthened community resilience across Tonga.

Strategic Direction

TRCS's organizational strategy is anchored in two core goals:

1. Expand and sustain services by building resilience and mobilizing resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of the National Society
2. Empower professional staff to elevate service delivery and leadership, ensuring timely and effective responses to communities and the most vulnerables.



Key Areas of Focus

To achieve these goals, TRCS is committed to the following strategic priorities:

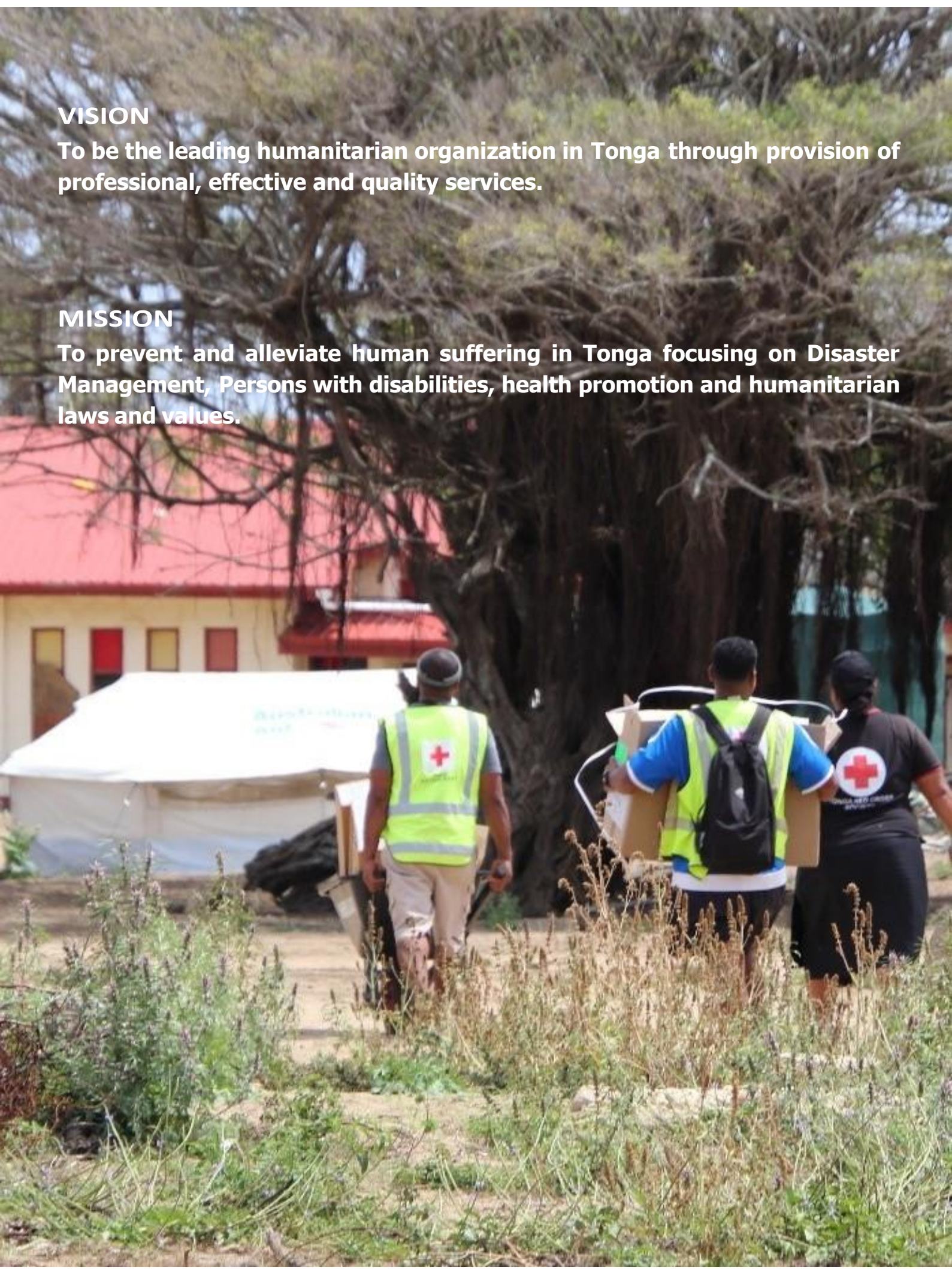
- **Capacity building for staff and volunteers;** empowering our teams with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver services to the highest standards of excellence.
- **Strengthening volunteerism;** fostering a strong, active and committed volunteer base that embodies the spirit of humanitarian service and is ready to engage in any disaster response.
- **Advancing health services;** expanding First Aid outreach and enhancing blood donation programs to meet emergency and lifesaving needs.
- **Disaster preparedness and response;** maintaining a responsive and well-equipped team with pre-positioned stock supplies, ready to act immediately in any emergency.
- **Community and partner engagement;** building strong community memberships at the branch level and cultivating relationships with businesses and funding partners to support TRCS activities and sustainability.
- **Humanitarian advocacy;** Influencing policies and legislation to enable timely and effective disaster response, while increasing the visibility and impact of TRCS's work.

VISION

To be the leading humanitarian organization in Tonga through provision of professional, effective and quality services.

MISSION

To prevent and alleviate human suffering in Tonga focusing on Disaster Management, Persons with disabilities, health promotion and humanitarian laws and values.



REBUILDING FROM HUNGA TONGA HUNGA HA'APAI (DISASTER MANAGEMENT)

The recovery operation for the catastrophic underwater volcano eruption and the ensuing tsunami continued well into 2023. The extent of the damage caused by the disasters were felt largely across the western side of the main island of Tongatapu, 'Eua and Ha'apai islands. One year on from the disaster, displaced families continue to live with their relatives and in makeshift temporary shelters.

Informed by assessments, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the recovery efforts, ongoing discussions with key stakeholders on the ground, the recovery operation was further adjusted and refined to meet the current need of the tsunami affected communities.

The recovery activities centred on providing several cash initiatives to support shelter recovery and the diverse needs of the affected population, and building a stronger national society to be prepared to continue responding in times of crisis through capacity building for staff and fostering domestic and international partnership.

- *Multipurpose cash grants reached affected people across the tsunami affected communities in 'Eua, Tongatapu and Ha'apai islands. Continuous efforts to erect two evacuation centres for two affected communities in the Ha'apai islands.*
- *Strengthening the national society to be better prepared to respond, through the procurement of a 3-tonne truck for logistics.*
- *Two communities received three motorboat engines to support with reviving their fishing livelihood.*



Cash Shelter Recovery Initiative

Program Overview

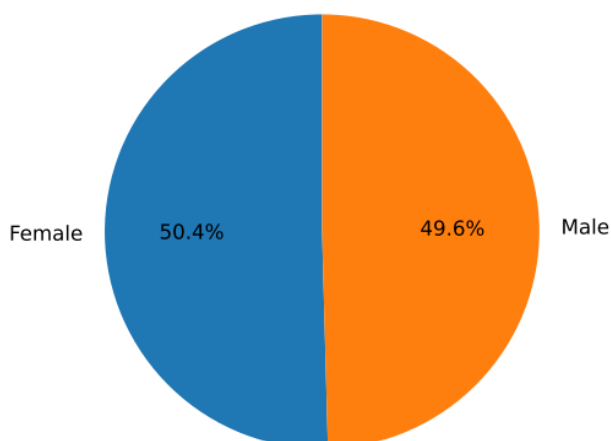
Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) launched a cash-based shelter recovery initiative to support families affected by the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha‘apai volcanic eruption and tsunami. A total of 232 households received direct cash assistance aimed at restoring safe, dignified, and resilient living conditions. This initiative was strategically designed in response to a government policy requiring affected families to contribute 5% of the total cost toward rebuilding their homes. Recognizing that this financial burden could hinder recovery for the most vulnerable, TRCS provided targeted cash support to help households meet this requirement. By placing resources directly in the hands of beneficiaries, the initiative promoted autonomy, accelerated recovery, and ensured that shelter solutions were tailored to each family's unique needs and circumstances.

Visual Breakdown

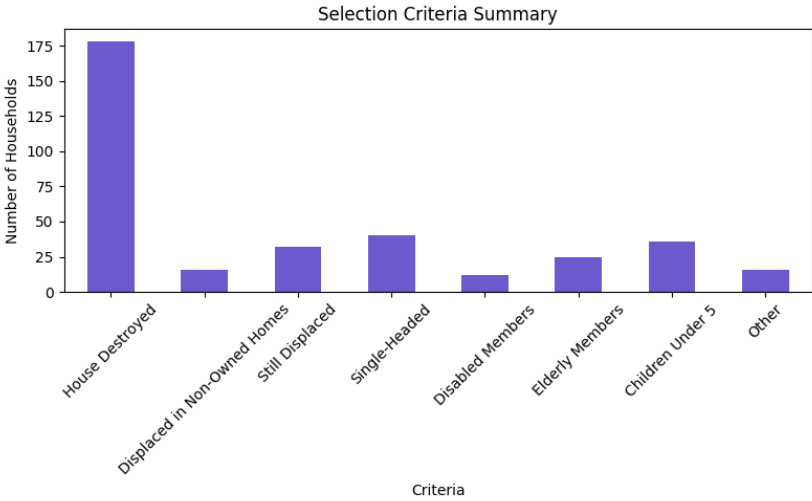
The following visualizations provide a comprehensive overview of the households supported through the Cash Shelter Recovery Initiative. They illustrate the demographic composition of beneficiaries, the criteria used for household selection, and the extent of support provided to vulnerable groups such as children under five, elderly members, and persons with disabilities. Additionally, the geographic coverage chart highlights the distribution of assistance across affected locations, offering insight into how TRCS prioritized areas with the greatest need. These visuals collectively demonstrate the initiative's inclusive approach and its alignment with both community vulnerability and government rebuilding requirements.

Gender Distribution	
Gender	Number of beneficiaries
Female	117
Male	115
Total Households	232

Gender Distribution of Beneficiaries

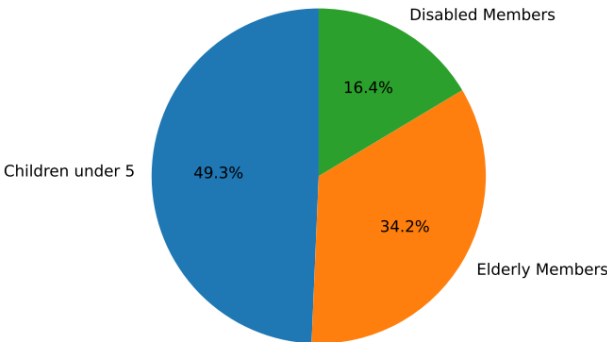


Selection Criteria's

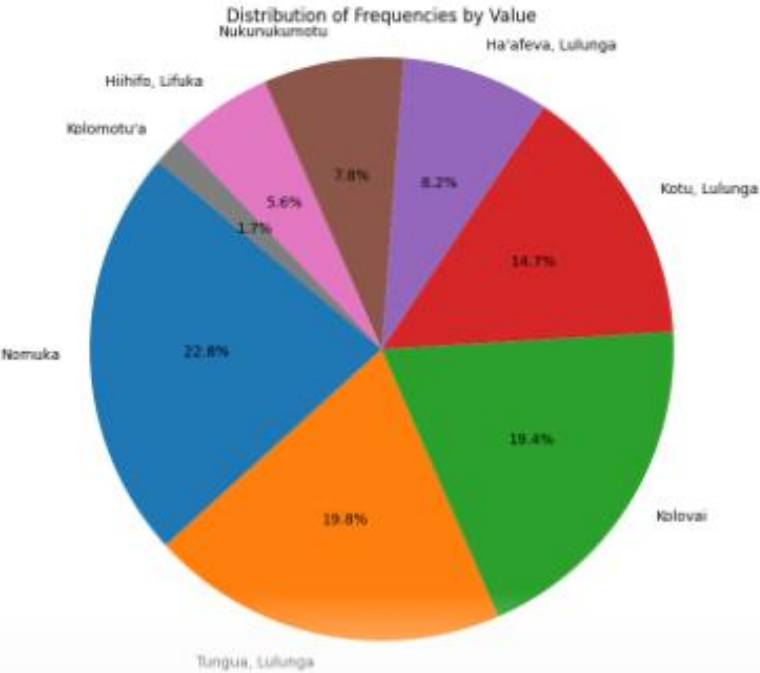


Vulnerable Group Supported

Support to Vulnerable Groups



Location Coverage



Recommendations for Future Shelter Recovery Initiatives

Building on the findings from the 2023 Cash Shelter Recovery Initiative, TRCS can strengthen future efforts through the following strategic actions:

1. Plan for Scalability and Rapid Deployment

Developing a scalable model for cash-based shelter recovery will allow TRCS to respond quickly and effectively in future disasters. This includes pre-positioning resources, training staff, and establishing partnerships with financial service providers.

2. Ensure Government Accountability in Rebuilding Commitments

The initiative was designed to help families meet the government's requirement to contribute 5% toward the cost of rebuilding their homes. However, delays in government-led reconstruction efforts meant that many families waited extended periods before their shelters were rebuilt. TRCS should advocate for clearer timelines and accountability mechanisms to ensure that government commitments are fulfilled promptly, avoiding undue hardship for affected households.

3. Expand Support for Vulnerable Groups

Future programs should increase tailored support for households with children under five, elderly members, and persons with disabilities. This could include additional cash top-ups, accessibility improvements, and integration with health and psychosocial services.

4. Strengthen Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms

Involving community leaders and affected families in program design and implementation ensures transparency and relevance. Establishing feedback channels can help TRCS adapt its approach in real time and build trust within communities.

5. Improve Data Systems for Targeting and Monitoring

Investing in digital tools for registration, tracking, and impact assessment will enhance TRCS's ability to identify needs, monitor progress, and report outcomes effectively.

6. Integrate Livelihood and Shelter Recovery

Linking shelter support with livelihood restoration—such as vocational training, small business grants, or agricultural inputs—can help families rebuild sustainably and reduce long-term vulnerability.

7. Plan for Scalability and Rapid Deployment

Developing a scalable model for cash-based shelter recovery will allow TRCS to respond quickly and effectively in future disasters. This includes pre-positioning resources, training staff, and establishing partnerships with financial service providers.

Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)

Program Overview

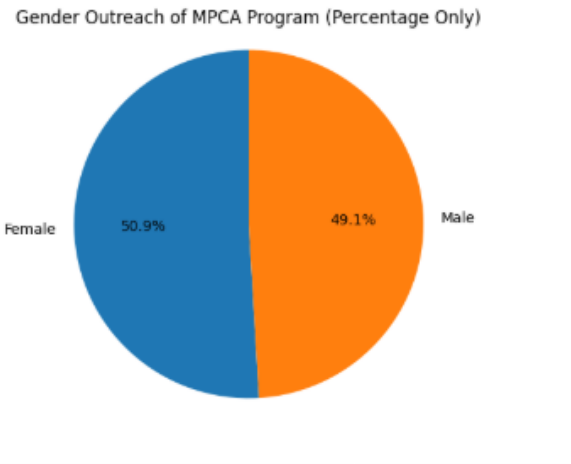
Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) implemented a Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) program to support households affected by the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha’apai volcanic eruption and tsunami. The initiative aimed to empower families with the financial means to meet essential needs such as food, hygiene, utilities, and transportation while displaced or awaiting permanent shelter.

A total of 740 households were supported through this program, resulting in an overall outreach of 3,554 individuals. Each household received four tranches of TOP 400, disbursed in two instalments. The cash value was calculated to cover 35% of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), factoring in inflation and median income levels. This approach promoted autonomy, dignity, and flexibility in recovery.

Visual Breakdown

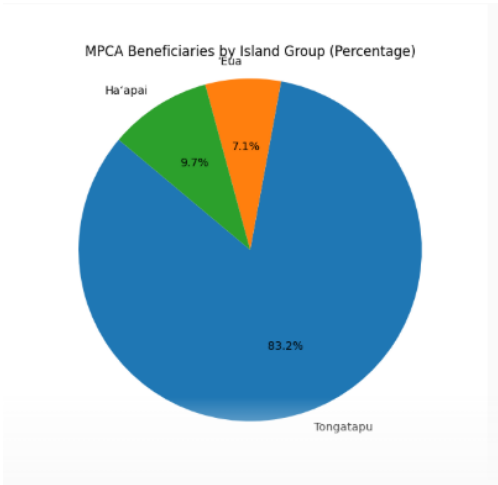
Gender Distribution

A total of 3,554 individuals were reached, with a nearly equal gender split.

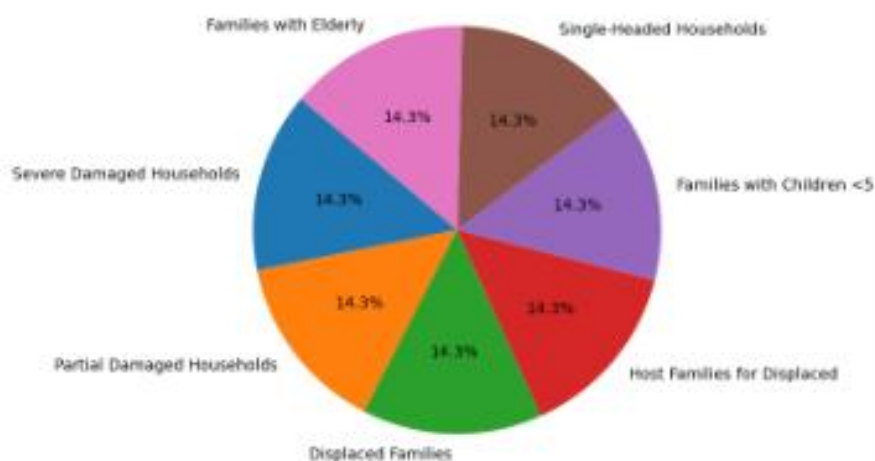


Geographic Coverage

Beneficiaries were distributed across three island groups:



MPCA Beneficiaries by Selection Criteria (Percentage)



Recommendations

1. Enhance Financial Inclusion

- Partner with financial service providers to support beneficiaries in opening and managing bank accounts.
- Provide financial literacy training to improve confidence in using digital and mobile banking services.

2. Strengthen Community Engagement

- Continue using community-based targeting and feedback mechanisms.
- Expand the use of Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) tools to ensure transparency and trust.

3. Improve Data Disaggregation

- Collect and analyze data by age, disability, and other vulnerability factors to better tailor future interventions.
- Use this data to inform inclusive programming and ensure no group is left behind.

4. Monitor Market Conditions

- Regularly update the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) to reflect inflation and changing household needs.
- Coordinate with the Cash Working Group to standardize MEB and transfer values across actors.

5. Expand Geographic Reach

- Explore options to include additional affected communities in outer islands or those not previously reached.
- Consider mobile cash delivery mechanisms for hard-to-reach areas.

6. Integrate Livelihood Support

- Link cash assistance with early recovery and livelihood programs to promote long-term resilience.
- Offer optional training or grants for small-scale income-generating activities.

7. Document and Share Lessons Learned

- Develop a case study or learning brief to share with partners and donors.
- Highlight successes, challenges, and innovations from the MPCA rollout.

Mid-Term Review of the HTHH Operation

In 2023, a Mid-Term Review was conducted to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Tonga Red Cross Society's response to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami. The findings below highlight key achievements, challenges, and recommendations for future resilience."

This section presents a formatted summary of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) conducted for the response to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai (HTHH) volcanic eruption and tsunami. The review assesses the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and connectedness of the operation and provides recommendations for future planning.

Key Findings from HTHH Mid Term Review

COVID-19 Challenges

Pandemic restrictions delayed relief efforts and disrupted coordination, highlighting the need for integrated health preparedness.

Funding vs. Impact

Despite full funding, slow spending limited the operation's reach and effectiveness during the review period.

Limited Sustainable Recovery

Recovery efforts lacked alignment with long-term community needs, leaving many families in temporary conditions.

Capacity Building Gaps

TRCS's institutional growth was limited, with gaps in training and planning for future disaster response.

CVA Success Story

The Cash and Voucher Assistance program was well-executed, reaching vulnerable groups and earning high satisfaction.

Recommendations

- Assess needs of the most vulnerable who have not recovered.
- Review recovery plan with adaptive principles and strategic innovation.
- Prioritize PER (Preparedness for Effective Response) to assess capacity.
- Define a detailed National Society Development (NSD) plan for TRCS.
- Strengthen coordination with IFRC Regional Secretariat for technical support

Lessons Learned

- Preparedness and pre-positioned stock enabled fast response.
- Early warning systems must be regularly tested.
- Evacuation routes need better community understanding.
- Mangroves helped reduce tsunami damage in coastal areas.
- Cash assistance is effective and preferred by affected communities.
- Unsolicited in-kind donations created logistical challenges.

Strategic Insights

- Apply adaptive principles to meet shifting needs and build resilience.
- Broaden support through community-based approaches.
- Scale up recovery activities including housing and livelihoods.
- Enhance TRCS capacity through training, planning, and infrastructure.
- Improve coordination, documentation, and community engagement.

CAPACITY BUILDING & STRENGTHENING BRANCHES

A fully functional National society relies on the capacity and skills of its current staff, volunteers, and the strength of its systems and processes both at the headquarters and at the branch levels. Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) prioritized building internal capacity to enhance its ability to respond effectively to emergencies and deliver quality services to communities.

Developing the Capacity and Skills of Red Cross staff



As Tonga Red Cross continued its response to the aftermath of disasters, it became imperative to equip staff with necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to meet growing humanitarian needs.

One of the key initiatives in 2023 was the implementation of cash-based assistance programmes, in partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). As part of this effort, TRCS Staff participated a Level 2 Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) training held in Fiji, alongside participants from other Pacific National Societies.

This training strengthened TRCS's preparedness to deliver cash assistance and provided advanced knowledge on data protection and information management principles, further enhancing the effectiveness and accountability of cash programming in communities.



Strengthening Through Field Experience and Technical Support

In addition to formal training, TRCS staff gained valuable hands-on experience by working alongside Red Cross delegates deployed to support the Tonga appeal. These deployments provided on-the-ground learning opportunities and technical guidance in areas such as:

- Operations management
- Logistics and procurement
- Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)
- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

This collaborative approach not only strengthened staff capacity but also improved coordination and operational efficiency across TRCS branches.

STRENGTHENING the RED CROSS BRANCHES



Tonga Red Cross Society operates through three active branches located in Ha'apai, 'Eua, and Vava'u. Each branch is led by an Officer in Charge, responsible for managing resources and coordinating activities at the local level.

These branches play a vital role in ensuring that TRCS services and programs reach even the most remote communities. They serve as hubs for humanitarian action, fostering meaningful connections and guaranteeing timely support to those most affected by disasters or in need of assistance.

Spotlight: Meleane Mahe – Officer in Charge, 'Eua Branch

In the heart of Tonga, amidst the storms and waves, stands a beacon of hope—**Meleane Mahe**, Officer in Charge of the Tonga Red Cross Society's 'Eua Branch. Her humanitarian journey began in 2010, and she continues to serve with unwavering dedication.

When asked about her mission, Meleane shared:

"Humanitarian work is not just a job; it is our calling at Tonga Red Cross Society. When disaster strikes, we know that an immediate response is crucial.

Working with the heart is my driving force. In the field, nothing seems impossible when you are fueled by compassion and the desire to make a difference.

Yes, we face challenges—many of them. But I always remind myself that I must reach out to those suffering, to extend a helping hand and ease their burden. I imagine myself in their shoes, and that empathy propels me to assist them in any way I can."

Her story reflects the spirit of TRCS branch leadership—grounded in empathy, driven by purpose, and committed to serving communities with compassion and resilience.



YOUTH AND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the core and backbone of the Tonga Red Cross Society's humanitarian work. In 2023, 16 volunteers were actively engaged—demonstrating commitment, compassion, and resilience in supporting communities across Tonga.

Volunteer Contributions in 2023

Volunteers played a vital role in:

- Supporting recovery efforts during the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai appeal
- Delivering First Aid assistance and providing standby support during sporting events
- Assisting with blood donation drives
- Participating in assessments, monitoring, and evaluation activities
- Supporting community outreach programmes

Being trained in Kobo Toolbox and data collection tools, and assisting in the registration of beneficiaries for response and recovery activities

Their involvement ensured that TRCS could extend its reach and impact, even with limited staff capacity, and helped maintain accurate and timely data for effective service delivery.



INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

In 2023, Tonga Red Cross Society welcomed four interns from St. Joseph Business College as part of its youth engagement and capacity-building efforts. The internship programme provided practical experience in humanitarian operations and supported TRCS's ongoing recovery activities.

Internship Details

- First-year students were attached for 4 weeks
- Second-year students completed a 6-week attachment

Key Contributions

Interns played a valuable role in:

- Beneficiary registration during response and recovery activities
- Field data collection using Kobo Toolbox and other digital tools
- Supporting programme teams with administrative and logistical tasks

Their involvement significantly boosted TRCS's operational capacity and reduced the need for volunteer engagement during their attachment period.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH OUR HEALTH SERVICES

Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) continued to deliver essential health services across Tonga, focusing on First Aid training, blood donation drives, and community health promotion. These efforts were led by a small but dedicated Health Team consisting of two staff members, both certified First Aid Instructors. Despite limited human resources, the team achieved significant outreach and impact. Plans are underway to recruit a Health Coordinator to strengthen programme delivery and coordination in the coming year.



◆ Total Reach in 2023: 1981 People.
 This figure reflects the combined reach of all health-related activities conducted by TRCS throughout the year.

Programme Breakdown

First Aid Training

- 1,349 people trained
- 618 were female (≈45.8%)
- Delivered to community members, government staff, and NGOs



Health Promotion & Psychosocial Support



- 452 people reached
- 305 were female (≈67.5%)
- Target groups included youth, faith-based organizations, and vulnerable communities

Blood Donation Drives

- 180 pints of blood collected
- 100% of donors were male
- Drives held in vocational schools and community events



Male

Recommendations:**1. Recruit a Health Coordinator**

To enhance programme planning, monitoring, and expansion, the recruitment of a dedicated Health Coordinator is essential.

2. Promote Gender-Inclusive Blood Donation

Develop targeted campaigns to encourage female participation in blood donation, addressing cultural or logistical barriers.

3. Expand First Aid Outreach

Continue scaling up First Aid training, especially in remote and outer island communities. Consider integrating training into school and youth programmes.

4. Strengthen Mental Health Support

Increase the frequency and depth of psychological first aid and community connectedness activities, especially in post-disaster contexts.

5. Improve Data Monitoring

Introduce digital tools for real-time tracking of participant demographics and feedback to improve programme responsiveness and reporting.

'OFA TUI 'AMANAKI CENTRE

Prioritizing Safety, Wellbeing, and Resilience for Students with Special Needs

Following the temporary closure due to the Hunga Tonga – Hunga Ha’apai volcanic eruption response, the OTA Centre reopened in September 2023. During the closure, staff maintained regular home visits to ensure continuity of care and connection with students and their families.

Food Security Project

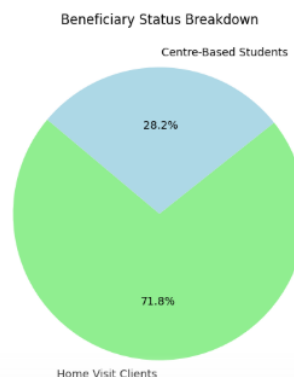
Empowering Families, Enhancing Wellbeing, and Building Resilience

With generous support from the Government of Canada, the OTA Centre launched a Food Security Project aimed at improving household resilience and wellbeing for students with special needs. The initiative provided:

- Soil, vegetable seedlings, fencing materials, and gardening tools
- Workshops on first aid, health screenings, vegetable gardening, and crafts for livelihood development

Beneficiary Reach:

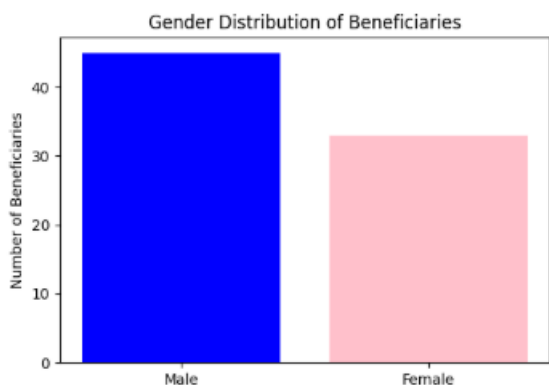
- Total Beneficiaries: 79 Students
- Engagement Type: 71% Home Visits and 28% attended the Centre regularly



Gender Distribution:

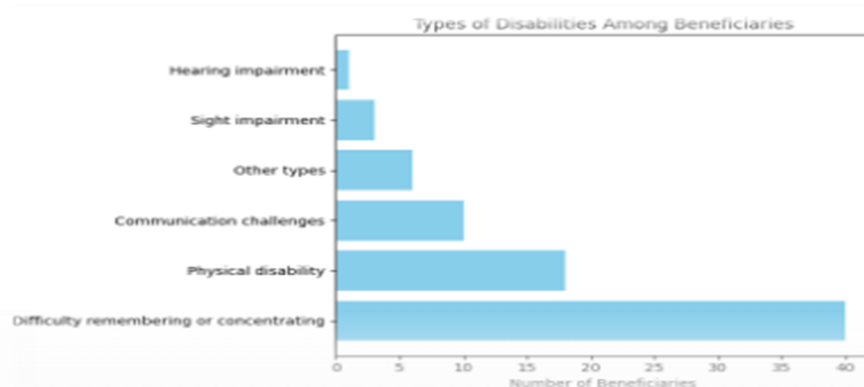
The project reached both male and female students equitably

Gender	Percentage
Male	57
Female	43



Types of Disabilities

The diversity of disabilities among beneficiaries highlights the need tailored support:



Impact Story: Sione Saafi of Ha'ateiho

Sione, a 20-year-old with memory and concentration challenges, found purpose and routine through gardening. His mother shared:

"I observed a level of ownership from Sione to take care of the garden. This boosted his concentration as it was an activity he took a liking to. He was more active, always willing to water and weed out the vegetables."

The garden became a source of fresh food, exercise and emotional wellbeing for the entire family.



Recommendations:

Based on the data and outcomes of the Food Security Project, the following recommendations are proposed:

Expand Home-Based Support: Given the high number of home-visit beneficiaries, future projects should continue and expand outreach to households, especially in remote areas.

Tailor Activities by Disability Type: With over 50% experiencing cognitive challenges, activities should include memory-enhancing and routine-based tasks

Increase Accessibility for Severe Cases: For the 16% who "cannot do at all," adaptive tools and caregiver training should be prioritized.

Gender-Inclusive Programming: Maintain balanced gender representation and explore gender-specific needs in future livelihood activities.

Monitor Long-Term Impact: Establish follow-up mechanisms to assess sustained benefits in nutrition, mental health, and family wellbeing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2023, the Tonga Red Cross Society continued its response to the aftermath of the underwater volcanic eruption and tsunami, made possible through the generous support of our partners. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), our Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners, international donors, and local partners. Your unwavering support enabled us to reach further and serve more communities than we could have alone.

Your contributions empowered us to give back—providing timely assistance, restoring hope, and strengthening resilience across Tonga.

On behalf of the Tonga Red Cross Society, we thank each and every one of you who stood with us throughout the year. From hearts full of gratitude, we say:

Malo 'Aupito.

Our Partners in 2023

Partner Type	Organization / Entity
Movement Partner	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC)
Movement Partner	International Committee of the Red Cross
Movement Partner	Australian Red Cross
Movement Partner	New Zealand Red Cross
International Donors	Government of Canada, other bilateral and multilateral donors
International Donors	European Union
Local Partners	Ministry of Energy, Information, Disaster, Environment and Climate Change
Local Partners	Ministry of Infrastructure
Local Partners	Ministry of Health
Local Partners	St. Joseph Business College (SJBC)
Local Partners	Tonga Institute of Science and Technology (TIST)
Local Partners	Tonga Development Bank
Local Partners	MBF Bank Limited
Local Partners	Australia New Zealand (ANZ) Bank
Local Partners	Band of South Pacific (BSP) Bank

Partner Type	Organization / Entity
Technical & Operational Support	Internation Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) Delegates (Operations, Logistics, CVA, DRR, Communications, PMER)