CAN DO Update – Tropical Cyclone Gita

13 February 2018

Tropical Cyclone (TC) Gita passed by Samoa on 10 February 2018 and Niue on 11 February 2018, with damage reported in Samoa, including localised flooding. On Monday, 12 February TC Gita made landfall in Tonga as an intense Tropical Cyclone (category 4) with maximum sustained winds of 230 km/h.

Prior to making landfall, the Government of Tonga announced a state of emergency across the country to prepare for the cyclone. As of Tuesday, 13 February, roads all over Tongatapu are blocked by debris and downed power lines, hampering relief efforts. In addition, many houses and buildings have been damaged. The full extent of the damage will only be known in coming days. The Government of Tonga has requested support from the Australian and New Zealand Government. TC Gita, is forecast to enter Fijian territory, passing the Southern Lau Group of islands on 13 February.

Agencies from the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) including; Act for Peace, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency Australia, Anglican Board of Mission, Anglican Overseas Aid, Transform Aid International (Baptist World Aid Australia), UnitingWorld, and Caritas Australia, have local partner presence in affected areas and are responding to the immediate needs on the ground. CAN DO agencies also recognise the role of New Zealand partners and are working closely with them to coordinate our response.

Prior to the cyclone hitting, our partners took measures to prepare for its onset. This involved preparing relief items for distribution to communities including; 2800 blankets, 1295 kitchen kits, 2833 water containers, and 764 buckets, positioned in 6 locations around the main island, Tongatapu. Churches have opened their doors to communities, as evacuation centres, to provide much needed shelter.

CAN DO agencies have over 300 staff and volunteers on the ground in Tonga who are cooperating with local authorities in response and distribution. They are also carrying out assessments of the destruction and community needs.

Our partners are monitoring the situation and working with local authorities in affected areas of Samoa as well as parts of Fiji which are likely to be impacted.

CAN DO comprises Act for Peace, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency Australia, Anglican Board of Mission, Anglican Overseas Aid, the Australian Lutheran World Service, Transform Aid International (Baptist World Aid Australia), UnitingWorld, and Caritas Australia.

 *CAN DO is a member of the Australian Humanitarian Partnership* *(AHP)* *between the Australian Government and some of Australia’s leading international development NGOs. The AHP has a strategic focus on Pacific preparedness and resilience work, in particular building the capacity of local organisations across the region to manage disasters more effectively.*