



Kingdom of Tonga Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster and Reconstruction Cluster

TC Gita 2018 Response Review Workshop Final Report



7 September 2018



Supported by

Shelter Cluster Pacific

ShelterCluster.org

Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

BACKGROUND

Category 4 Tropical Cyclone Gita made landfall in Tonga between 12th and 13th February 2018 with average winds of 110 knots (285km/hour) causing damages to infrastructure and homes in the islands of Tongatapu and 'Eua. The emergency response phase was led by the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) which is also the Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster lead. Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI), the Reconstruction Cluster oversaw the transition into recovery.

INTRODUCTION

The TC Gita Shelter Cluster response review workshop took place in Nuku'alofa on 7th September 2018. The event was open to all emergency shelter and non-food items cluster and reconstruction cluster members and was attended by forty (40) participants representing a range of international and national NGOs, church groups, Red Cross, government line ministries, donors, Disabled People's Organisation (DPO), other clusters, police, customs, and representatives from His Majesty's Armed Forces (HMAF). The reflection was coordinated by the cluster lead agencies – National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) and Ministry of Infrastructure (MoI) with the support of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

The workshop involved a series of group discussions and plenary sessions which analysed the successes and challenges experienced during the TC Gita response, focussing on eight key areas including:

- Coordination
- Assessment
- Distribution
- Relief packages
- Vulnerability & priority Needs
- Community engagement and feedback
- Monitoring & reporting
- Support to early recovery

(Refer annex 2)

The purpose of the workshop was to provide a forum for participants to reflect on the successes and challenges faced by shelter actors during TC Gita and to identify recommendations to strengthen future responses.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Participants in the workshop identified many positive aspects from the TC Gita response which was effective especially during the emergency phase. There is much knowledge, capacity and experience to build on for future responses.

Overall successes included:

- Effective preparedness messaging and early warning systems managed by NEMO which ensured that there was no loss of life as a consequence of TC Gita.
- Quick deployment of pre-positioned relief supplies by NEMO, Red Cross, MORDI/Live & Learn/CARE and Caritas that ensured a rapid response to immediate

needs. In general, participants found that the relief items distributed were relevant and appropriate to the context.

- Effective emergency shelter coordination during the early stages of the response with considerable openness of NEMO staff to discussion, strategy development and problem solving with shelter agencies.

Key challenges included:

- NEMO was responsible for both the overall response coordination as well as leadership of two clusters: shelter and logistics. This placed significant additional pressure on NEMO staff and resources.
- Assessments took time to implement and results did not come out in a timely manner to inform decision-making. Additionally, there were many agencies and ministries conducting assessments, resulting in 29 separate assessments in 'Eua alone, leading to assessment fatigue.
- Further work needs to be done to ensure protection mainstreaming and targeting of the most vulnerable people and households during both the response and recovery phase.
- Transition from emergency phase to recovery, from NEMO to MoI meant that the response lacked continuity and predictability of coordination and strategy between phases.

While significant investment has been made and capacity exists within the NEMO office to manage the early response phase, the same level of institutional investment and capacity is not present as the response transitions to recovery. A number of the challenges in the response arose owing to this lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities and capacity during the early recovery phase as cluster leadership transitioned from NEMO to MoI which slowed the response at this stage, leading to the intervention of the Ministry of Finance and the adoption of a cash-based recovery strategy that did not build on existing work done by shelter cluster agencies.

Key Recommendations (In order of priority)

- Finalise Terms of Reference for the Shelter Cluster – including clarification of roles, roles responsibilities, and transition from NEMO (response) to MoI (recovery)
- Finalise/Endorse Build Back Safer (BBS) Information Education Communication (IEC) materials
- Shelter Coordination Training for Shelter Coordination Team (NEMO, MOI and key partners)
- Standardise Shelter relief package and Non-Food Items (NFIs)
- Develop Shelter Cluster Strategy template
- Training in the use of Kobo for NEMO and key shelter partners
- Develop multi-hazard contingency plan, e.g. Tropical Cyclone, Tsunami, etc. based on most likely scenarios
- Develop shelter inputs for a common assessment form
- Develop guidelines on vulnerability prioritisation criteria

ANNEX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS

DRAFT WORKPLAN FOR SHELTER TECHNICAL GROUP (STG) – 7/09/18

Key Recommended Activities	Responsible	Timeframe	Resource required	Order of priority
Coordination				
Review TOR for the Shelter Cluster. Refer existing draft TOR with NEMO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IFRC/NEMO/MOI to draft. STG to review/endorse. 	30/11/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting of STG Meeting of whole cluster. 	1
Develop Shelter Cluster strategy template	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEMO/MOI (supported by TRCS/Caritas). IFRC to support 	30/12/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time from NEMO/MOI Meeting of STG Meeting of whole cluster. 	5
Develop multi-hazard contingency plan, e.g. Tropical Cyclone, Tsunami, etc. based on most-likely scenarios.	IFRC/NEMO/MOI	29/02/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit from IFRC Shelter team – 1 week. Funding? 	7
Shelter Coordination Training for Shelter Coordination Team. (NEMO, MOI, key shelter partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IFRC to develop training in collaboration with NEMO/MOI. 	04/12 - 07/12/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit from IFRC Shelter team – 1 week. Funding? 	3
Information Management				
Develop shelter inputs for a common assessment form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MORDI + TRCS to work with NEMO, MOI, Statistics to develop shelter input for initial and recovery assessment 	30/03/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MORDI/TRCS staff time. Meeting of STG Meeting of whole cluster. 	8
Training in the use of Kobo for NEMO and key shelter partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEMO 	28/02/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time NEMO and cluster agencies. Tools (tablets/phones) from NEMO/Statistics 	6
Technical Guidance				
Standardise Shelter relief package and Non-Food items (NFIs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEMO/TRCS +STG 	07/12/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Meeting of STG Meeting of whole cluster. 	4
Develop guidelines on vulnerability prioritisation criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MIA + Caritas with support of STG 	30/03/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Meeting of STG Meeting of whole cluster. 	9
Finalise/Endorse Build Back Safer (BBS) Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOI/NEMO + STG 	30/11/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Meeting of STG 	2

Education Communication (IEC) materials. This was developed during TC Gita response currently with MORDI in 2 languages (English and local Tongan)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting of whole cluster. 	
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**The Shelter Technical Group (STG), a group formed after the response review workshop. The STG is selected to represent the wider shelter cluster agencies and institutions and works to advance the strategic direction, overall priorities, and advocacy of the shelter sector during preparedness, response and early recovery.*

ANNEX 2: SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

1. Coordination

Successes:

- Strong government-led coordination.
- Openness and responsiveness of NEMO to shelter responders including holding regular meetings, discussion of key issues in the response and advocating for the sector.
- Pre-established relationships between and key civil society partners – this made working together easier and more effective during the emergency and contributed to greater access and openness.
- Committed and hard-working personnel in NEMO and NGOs.
- Collaboration between HMAF and NEMO and the readiness of HMAF to contribute to the response.

Challenges:

- During the response phase, NEMO managed the overall response coordination as well as the shelter and logistics clusters. This created a significant additional burden on NEMO and NEMO staff that was already under pressure during the response.
- There were unclear government priorities for response and recovery, reflecting the influence of different ministries and departments with decision-making authority in the shelter sector. Response strategy developed relatively quickly and shelter agencies, working alongside NEMO and HMAF, were quick to distribute emergency relief items, especially tarpaulins and kitchen sets. There was a lack of clarity and strategy, however, about how this phase would move toward a recovery phase and, ultimately, different strategies for different phases were adopted. At this time, responsibility for the shelter cluster moved from NEMO to MoI. Further, as recovery funding became available the Ministry of Finance, working with the support of UNDP, adopted a cash-based recovery policy that had limited connection with earlier approaches adopted during the emergency phase.
- There was no system for progressive response to recovery programming and strategy development as different lead-ministries became involved at different times and were unaware of existing discussions, approaches, strategy and decisions. While there are clear mandates for response coordination (NEMO) and recovery coordination (MoI), greater coordination of the handover and more resources are necessary to ensure recovery programs and coordination build on the response phase. This lack of continuity and clarity of roles after the immediate response phase also impacted the response with some donated relief items that were intended for NGOs in response being kept by MoI for recovery purposes rather than being distributed early on.

- There was a lack of cross-sectoral coordination, especially around assessments and, in recovery, cash.

2. Assessment

Successes

- There is significant expertise in assessment process and methodology in Tonga and the 3Ws were identified by participants to have been useful in establishing basic ‘Who, What, Where’ information to inform response coordination.
- The Ministry of Statistics formed a ‘one stop shop’ for recovery assessments and conducted a detailed, multi-sector assessment with cluster inputs.

Challenges

- While there was a rapid assessment, results were not quickly shared.
- There were concerns about assessment fatigue with clusters, response agencies, line ministries conducting assessments. Anecdotal evidence suggests as many as 29 separate assessments were conducted on ‘Eua alone.
- While there were many assessments, there was no forum to coordinate these and share information from them and avoid duplication.
- Assessments were not necessarily informing different response phases and the process of information gathering and analysis was time consuming, which meant agencies and clusters needed to make decisions that were not informed by assessment results.
- Assessment processes relied very heavily on Town Officers, some of whom were excellent, and some of whom were less effective or, at times, exhibited bias in the assessment process.
- Immediate needs assessment processes with the Tonga Red Cross and government were not based on a common platform and could have been more closely linked.

3. Distribution

Successes

- There was fairly rapid distribution of relief items, especially those prepositioned by NEMO, Caritas, and Tonga Red Cross in Nuku’alofa and ‘Eua.
- Participants reported that the relief items were well received and appropriate to the context.
- It was easy to import relief items to Tonga and there was a tax exemption for imports specifically intended respond for the TC Gita response.

Challenges

- Concerns were raised by participants about the needs basis of the shelter and NFI distributions. Much of this came down to work with Town Officers who were responding to a range of pressures. In a number of cases, distributions went to influential people or families rather than being based only on need.
- In some cases, NFI kits (for example kitchen sets) which were intended for one family were broken up and distributed among different families, resulting in some people receiving cooking pots and others receiving plates without providing a coherent replacement of NFI needs.
- For recovery programming there was a substantial cash transfer approach. Cash distribution was based on formal land tenure. However, many people do not have

formal tenure. These groups include women (especially where there is no male over eighteen in the household), renters, and people living in informal settlements (especially on the outskirts of Nuku'alofa where people have migrated from other islands). In these cases, recovery funding was not made available and some gaps remain in the response.

4. Relief packages

Successes

- Prepositioned supplies and distributions occurred immediately after the cyclone (government, NGOs, Red Cross, MORDI/Live & Learn/CARE, Caritas).
- There was good communication and planning between local agencies and international agencies, especially around identifying and supplying common relief packages.
- Partnerships developed effectively between local and international NGOs and consortia for response formed to complement different NGOs specialisations and to channel donor funding.

Challenges

- There was no clear media or communications strategy and concerns that existing media coverage gave false hope and wrong information to affected households.
- There were concerns expressed about political influence on build back better strategy, especially around the decision made to distribute cash which occurred outside of formal cluster mechanisms and ministries and impacted existing NGOs response programs. NGOs reported working with communities with a focus on in-kind distribution and then finding that the communities had suddenly been given cash instead.
- There was a breakdown in collaboration and coordination between the response and recovery phases as leadership transitioned from NEMO to MoI. Perceived delays in the response – combined with a lack of publicity, awareness, and advocacy contributed to a sense that not enough was being done and political decision makers to make separate response strategies.

5. Vulnerability & Priority Needs

Successes

- Early warning advisories from NEMO and agencies on radio, TV, via text message were effective, well received and meant that there was no loss of life.
- A representative from the Tonga Disable People's Organisation was included in the EOC.
- Families and communities were resilient and supported each other, including those with vulnerabilities and provided immediate response after TC Gita.

Challenges

- There were few facilities for vulnerable people (especially for disabled, elderly) in evacuation centres.
- Vulnerable groups (women, children, disabled) were not well represented in assessments or response plans.
- Structural bias – such as legal impediments for women's ownership of land, informal settlements, or others such as renters were not effectively included in cash-based recovery strategy.

- Response agencies focussed on support to self-recovery in alignment with the shelter cluster strategy (through the provision of cash and relief NFIs) however there was a gap for people whose houses had been totally destroyed and who did not have the ability to build for themselves (through lack of skills, resources, or disability). This is a small but vulnerable group that has ongoing humanitarian needs and no clear pathway to recovery.
- The cluster did not have clear and accepted guidelines for protection and vulnerability.

6. Community engagement and feedback

Successes

- While concerns were expressed about the number of assessments, this also meant that there was a lot of community participation and consultation. This was especially the case in church responses owing to the pastoral relationship between the churches and their members and community needs are well known and articulated through these channels.
- Good preparedness messages and awareness meant that people took appropriate action as the cyclone approached (often going to an evacuation centre) and loss to human life was minimised.
- There were some agency-specific feedback mechanisms.

Challenges

- There was no overall, systematic cluster or response-wide system for understanding community views of the response or obtaining feedback.
- Much work was siloed with churches, private sector not represented in cluster system and mainly focussing on their own work and communities.
- There was limited means of hearing views and feedback from vulnerable populations including people with disabilities, women, and marginalised groups such as the Leiti population.

7. Monitoring and reporting

Successes

- Centralisation of monitoring and reporting by statistics department.
- NEMO-led emergency response phase included monitoring and reporting, especially back to the cluster.

Challenges

- There was, in general, a lack of accurate information and monitoring/reporting was not timely and did not inform decision-making.
- No standard approach or template for reporting or monitoring.
- There was limited coordination between ministries and departments seeking information and the statistics department which has expertise in information management, collection, assessment methodologies, etc.
- There was no agreed or common approach or standards for information management.

8. Support to Early Recovery

Successes

- Donors and overseas Tongans (via remittances) were quick to respond and to provide funding and support to response and recovery.
- Shelter cluster agencies, in conjunction with NEMO and MoI, developed an agreed approach to early recovery and this framed the initial response.

Challenges

- Uncertainty in the transition from response to recovery coordination slowed the response time and led to alternative approaches (cash distribution) being developed by government.

ANNEX 3: PARTICIPANTS LIST

Tonga Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster and Reconstruction Cluster – TC Gita 2018 Response Review Workshop

Date: 07th September 2018, Venue LDS Hall, Havelu NUKU'ALOFA Time 9am

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