



TO DISASTER SURVIVORS

Finau has lived on Tonga's 'Eua island for many years, so when she says Tropical Cyclone Gita was the worst storm she had experienced, it is the truth.

On the night Gita struck her home, Finau and her husband prayed without ceasing. More so when they realised parts of their house were being torn off by the high winds. When morning came and the danger had passed, she assessed the damage. Her two rainwater tanks were intact but the front of the house was badly damaged.

Later, members of her local Ama Takiloa group came to check on her, knowing her husband was unwell and may need help.

For Finau, being part of a group where people care and look out for each other helped her cope with a disaster she never imagined.

Cyclone Gita made landfall on February 13. Two people lost their lives in the storm. With winds reaching 233 kilometres an hour, it affected more than 70,000 people on the islands of Tongatapu and 'Eua. Homes and livelihoods were destroyed – 70-80% of fruit trees came down.

Almost one year after Cyclone Gita, many families are living in temporarily repaired homes with little assistance.

Thank you to all those who joined the lifeline with their donations to the Cyclone Gita Appeal. Tongans replanted gardens, repaired and replaced rainwater harvesting systems, provided community water tanks, and established home chicken farms after the storm.

Be the Lifeline to communities facing the worst effects of climate change.



Christian World Service
PO Box 22652,
Christchurch 8140
0800 74 7372 christmasappeal.org.nz

AMA TAKILOA

Ama Takiloa is a network of more than 300 women's groups offering training and support at the village level, and a partner of CWS. Most have 8 to 12 members and are supported by regular visits from Ama Takiloa trainers. The groups meet monthly and undertake activities such as making large tapa and mats, and working on demonstration gardens.

Together the women have learned new skills and developed markets for their products. Regular inspections by group members encourages pride in their homes and gardens but offers the opportunity to share knowledge and advice. Village-based they can be relied upon to know what is happening and who needs help. After the main response to Cyclone Gita, members systematically visited households and found the aid effort was very uneven.

In recent years planning and preparing in case of disaster have been important parts of the training programme. The women have used this knowledge to deal with Cyclone Ian that caused damage in the Ha'apai and Vava'u groups in January 2014. A few months after a major replanting programme, drought killed large sections of their flourishing gardens. Members have participated in national training exercises, including a tsunami simulation exercise supported by CWS and other agencies. The Tongan National Emergency Management Office continues to run training exercises to prepare communities for tsunami and other disasters. Working with government, Ama Takiloa members can play an important part in their communities.

Food security is an important issue for the women. The changed weather patterns and rising sea levels are threatening their gardens and livelihoods. Work on the community gardens enables them to learn new techniques to apply at home. They have turned to old methods and crops that are cheaper to grow. In response, trainers have been encouraging members to grow drought resistant Giant Taro and other traditional foods that are often more nutritious and less costly than more recent arrivals. Members now grow their own pandanus grass and mulberry for making traditional products.

Another area of expertise is water. Ama Takiloa women have learnt to manage and repair their own rainwater tanks rather than depend on the some times costly and unreliable public systems. In drought prone areas they use gray water for gardens.



SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION



The 2018 Appeal puts the spotlight on our responsibilities to each other and the planet our home. In 2015, the United Nations agreed to a new agenda for sustainable development made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Goal 13 is a commitment to take action on climate change by strengthening local resilience and enabling communities to adapt to climate-related risks and natural disaster in all countries. Climate mitigation, adaption, reduction and disaster risk reduction strategies are part of this goal which includes a US\$100 billion global fund for developing countries needing assistance to meet the Paris Agreement as well as providing specialised support to small island and least developed states.

In October the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported there is only 12 years to make the changes necessary to keep global temperature rise to 1.5°C and avoid catastrophic environmental breakdown. Urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts is very important for Tonga. Sea level rise averages 6 mm per year, above the global average. Rain is less frequent but much heavier and therefore more dangerous when it comes. Its 36 inhabited islands are more vulnerable to disaster: cyclone, drought, flooding and tsunamis.

Cyclone season runs from November 1 to April 30. Tropical cyclones are low pressure systems which form over warm waters with gale force winds. In severe cyclones winds exceed 64 knots or 118 kilometres per hour. Each year an average of four cyclones occur in the western Pacific and seven in the east.

Join the Lifeline so all people have food, water, dignity and lives free of violence. Leave no one behind. Support the [Christmas Appeal](#).

