



Humanitarian Aid Decision

23 02 01

Title: Recovery Assistance to the Victims of Cyclones in the Cook Islands

Location of operation: COOK ISLANDS

Amount of decision: EUR 200,000

Decision reference number: ECHO/COK/BUD/2005/01000

Explanatory Memorandum

1 - Rationale, needs and target population.

1.1. - Rationale:

Between 6 February and 6 March 2005 the Cook Islands¹ were hit by five tropical cyclones. While having experienced climatic extremes of strong winds and sea surges, being struck by four cyclones in four weeks has constituted an historic natural disaster event for the Cook Islands.

On Sunday, 6 February 2005 tropical cyclone Meena struck the main islands of Rarotonga and Mangaia, causing severe damage to coastline beaches and homes on the beach front, while sea sprays burnt agricultural food crops.

On 15 February 2005, tropical cyclone Nancy struck the Northeast and Eastern side of the island of Rarotonga, but also damaged the nearby islands of Aitutaki, Atiu, Mitiaro and Mauke. The damaging effects on fruit trees and food crops in these areas are estimated at 90-100%.

On Friday 17 February tropical cyclone Percy severely struck two islands in the Northern Cook Islands (Pukapuka and Nassau), rated as Category 4 strength on the Saffir-Simpson Scale. According to the damage report for Nassau Island, nearly all homes were destroyed and damage to crops was no less than 100%. The affected islands of Pukapuka and Nassau remain in a state of National Emergency, as declared by the government on 28 February.

¹ Located in Oceania, the Cook Islands are located in the South Pacific Ocean, about one-half of the way from Hawaii to New Zealand. The Cook Islands are comprised of two main groups of islands: the Northern and Southern groups. The Southern Group consists of Rarotonga (the biggest and the main island with the administrative centre), Mangaia, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, Manuae and Takutea Islands. The Northern Group consists of Penrhyn, Manihiki, Pukapuka, Rakahanga, Swarow, Nassau and Palmerston Islands .

On 28 February 2005 tropical cyclone Olaf struck Rarotonga on the Northwest and Western side of the island; rough seas damaged many properties and food crops (severe salt spray burns) on the coastline towards the Western side of Rarotonga.

Finally, on 6 March cyclone Rae affected the region.

Based on the damage assessment carried out by the Government of the Cook Islands, the locally grown food supply of the entire population was severely destroyed by strong winds carrying sea salt from the ocean, thereby burning/scorching all crops. Food shortage is expected to be severe on Pukapuka and Nassau, and significant on the rest of the islands except Penrhyn, thus the food security remains grim for the next nine to twelve months. Crop recovery is being hampered by too few readily available local planting materials and seeds, as well as difficulty in accessing farming land due to fallen trees blocking the roads.



Map: UN-OCHA

1.2. - Identified needs:

The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team was deployed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to determine the extent of damages sustained by the 15 islands of the Cook Island archipelago after 5 consecutive tropical cyclones, and identification of priority relief needs for assistance from the international community, as well as longer-term needs for sustainable development during the recovery phase.

There were no casualties although the shortage of potable water caused gastro-intestinal problems, especially diarrhoea amongst children in Nassau. Storm surge caused major damage to island infrastructure especially along coastal regions, and inundated most of the islands' taro plantations, thus seriously impacting the normal diet of the islanders, a situation that is estimated to last for up to 12 months whilst taro and other crops regenerate. Salt in the soil is expected to take some time to leach out given low rainfall patterns in these areas.

Strong winds impacted heavily on domestic and community housing destroying up to 80% of the local housing as well as government infrastructure such as coastal roads, seawalls, government buildings, and public utilities, where they existed. All building materials will have to be brought in from outside which will be a costly endeavour.

Immediate emergency relief requirements have been covered in particular with the help of the region's traditional donors, i.e. Australia and New Zealand. However, assistance is still needed to support the population in re-establishing their means of subsistence, i.e. home gardens, root crops/vegetable farms, through the provision of seed packages and sufficient staple food planting materials, such as seeds and agricultural tools.

The government of the Cook Islands has officially requested FAO emergency assistance to affected farmers and fishing households, especially those on the islands of Pukapuka, Nassau, Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

1.3. - Target population and regions concerned:

100% of the population of the Northern Islands group, and 75% of the Southern Islands group should be considered as the target population: 11,710. Beneficiaries could be selected and given priority depending on their household food security status and the food security status in the location where they reside.

The islands most in need of assistance are those damaged by cyclone Percy, most notably Pukapuka and Nasau, in the Northern Islands group.

1.4. – Risk assessment and possible constraints:

The risk of further cyclone or other climatic hazards could worsen the situation .

2 - Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed.

2.1. - Objective:

Enable vulnerable cyclone stricken populations to recover from disaster

Specific objective:

To alleviate the food insecurity situation of the cyclone affected farmers and fishermen.

2.2. - Components:

- Agricultural and fishing material distribution
- Food seedling distribution

3 - Duration expected for actions in the proposed Decision.

The duration for the implementation of this decision will be 12 months.
Humanitarian operations funded by this decision must be implemented within this period.
Expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from 1 May 2005.
Start Date: 1 May 2005.

If the implementation of the actions envisaged in this Decision is suspended due to *force majeure*, or any comparable circumstance, the period of suspension will not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the humanitarian aid operations.

Depending on the evolution of the situation in the field, the Commission reserves the right to terminate the agreements signed with the implementing humanitarian organisations where the suspension of activities is for a period of more than one third of the total planned duration of the action. In this respect the procedures established in the general conditions of the specific agreement will be applied.

4 - Previous interventions/Decisions of the Commission within the context of the current crisis.

None.

5 - Other donors and donor co-ordination mechanisms.

The Pacific Island Forum (PIF) provided FJD 60,000 (about USD 36,000) through the Regional Natural Disaster Relief Fund to assist Cook Islands following recent cyclones. Australia increased its cyclone assistance for the Cook Islands and Tokelau to AUD 200,000 in response to the needs caused by cyclone Percy. New Zealand's aid, including for logistics provided by the Royal New Zealand Air Force amounted to NZD 1.16 million.

6 - Amount of Decision and distribution of funding by specific objectives:

6.1. - Total amount of the Decision: EUR 200,000

6.2. - Budget breakdown by specific objectives

Principal objective: Enable vulnerable cyclone stricken populations to recover from disaster			
Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (EUR)	Geographical area of operation	Potential partners²
Specific objective 1: To alleviate the food insecurity situation of the cyclone affected farmers and fishermen	200,000	Cyclone affected areas of Cook Islands	- FAO
TOTAL: 200,000			

² Food and Agriculture Organisation

7 –Evaluation

Under article 18 of Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid the Commission is required to "regularly assess humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations." These evaluations are structured and organised in overarching and cross cutting issues forming part of ECHO's Annual Strategy such as child-related issues, the security of relief workers, respect for human rights, gender. Each year, an indicative Evaluation Programme is established after a consultative process. This programme is flexible and can be adapted to include evaluations not foreseen in the initial programme, in response to particular events or changing circumstances. More information can be obtained at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/index_en.htm.

8 –Budget Impact article 23 02 01

	CE (in EUR)
Initial Available Appropriations for 2005	476.500.000
Supplementary Budgets	
Transfers	
Reinforcement from Emergency aid reserve	100.000.000
Total Available Credits	576.500.000
Total executed to date (as at 27/4/2005)	399.886.370
Available remaining	176.613.630
Total amount of the Decision	200 000

COMMISSION DECISION

of

on the financing of humanitarian operations from the general budget of the European Union in

COOK ISLANDS

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,
Having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid³, and in particular Article 14 thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) From 6 February to 6 March 2005 the Cook Islands experienced five cyclones causing major damage to the agricultural sector;
- (2) Whilst the immediate emergency relief requirements have been met more than 11,000 persons are estimated to be in need of recovery assistance enabling them to re-establish subsistence livelihoods;
- (3) An assessment of the humanitarian situation leads to the conclusion that humanitarian aid operations should be financed by the Community for a period of 12 months.
- (4) It is estimated that an amount of EUR 200,000 from budget line 23 02 01 of the general budget of the European Union is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to the cyclone victims in the Cook Islands, taking into account the available budget, other donors' interventions and other factors.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

1. In accordance with the objectives and general principles of humanitarian aid, the Commission hereby approves a total amount of EUR 200,000 for humanitarian aid operations in favour of the cyclone victims in Cook Islands by using line 23 02 01 of the 2005 general budget of the European Union.

³ OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1-6

2. In accordance with Article 2 (d) and 3 of Regulation (EC) No.1257/96, the humanitarian operations shall be implemented in the pursuance of the following specific objective:
 - To alleviate the food insecurity situation of the cyclone affected farmers and fishermen.

Article 2

1. The duration for the implementation of this decision shall be for a maximum period of 12 months, starting on 1 May 2005.
2. Expenditure under this decision shall be eligible as from 1 May 2005.
3. If the operations envisaged in this Decision are suspended owing to *force majeure* or comparable circumstances, the period of suspension shall not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the implementation of this Decision

Article 3

This Decision shall take effect on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission

Member of the Commission