

CONTEXT

- The Pacific Islands are highly vulnerable to recurring extreme weather events and natural hazards—such as droughts, earthquakes, floods, storms, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions—that can result in casualties, displacement, and other humanitarian impacts.
- Due to climate change, hydrometeorological disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity. As small island nations, Pacific Island countries are particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise and extreme weather events, with population centers and public infrastructure largely located in coastal areas.
- For the third consecutive year, La Niña conditions across the Pacific have resulted in extreme drought in several Pacific Island countries, exacerbating concerns about food insecurity, livelihoods, and other humanitarian needs. Severe drought conditions in Kiribati beginning in early 2022 had affected nearly all of the country's 123,000 residents, including an estimated 94,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance, as of August 2022, according to the UN. Meanwhile, parts of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), areas of northern Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu also experienced extreme or exceptional drought conditions between September and November 2022, according to New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research.
- The January 2022 eruptions of Tonga's Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai Volcano created an ash plume nearly 60,000 feet high and approximately 250 miles wide and generated tsunami waves of up to 49 feet. Overall, the eruptions and tsunami resulted in four deaths, affected approximately 85,000 of Tonga's 106,000 people, and caused widespread damage to agricultural land, houses, telecommunication systems, and other critical infrastructure.
- Election-related and tribal violence in Papua New Guinea's Highlands Region has affected nearly 265,000 people and displaced an estimated 80,000 individuals between May and October 2022, according to the UN, with tensions and displacement ongoing as of December 2022. The violence—including sexual and gender-based violence targeting women and girls—has resulted in at least 400 deaths and the closure of health facilities, markets, and schools.



ASSISTANCE

- USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) supports capacity-building and early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience (ER4) interventions throughout the Pacific Islands that promote self-reliance, enabling partner countries to lessen the impacts of natural hazards and respond more effectively to disasters. USAID/BHA's three-pronged approach—to enhance early warning systems, improve disaster preparedness, and strengthen first-responder capabilities—helps Pacific Island nations to strengthen national disaster risk management capacities.
- In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, USAID/BHA provided nearly \$7.3 million in ER4 funding to UN agency and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners to bolster disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience throughout the

region. This includes more than \$1.1 million to CARE to provide agricultural assistance and disability- and gender-inclusive community-based DRR activities throughout Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu. USAID/BHA also provided \$1.1 million to NGO partner Field Ready to support the local production of relief commodities to promote effective local responses in the region.

- USAID/BHA-supported DRR and resilience programming helps lay the foundation for longer term climate adaptation across the Pacific region, addressing climate risks and building resilience to climate-related disasters. For example, in FSM, USAID/BHA partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS) engages municipal chiefs, village chiefs, mayors, other community leaders, and vulnerable households to build capacity to reduce disaster risk through the development and implementation of participatory, comprehensive community disaster risk management and climate change adaptation plans. CRS also supports vulnerable households to diversify or enhance their agricultural livelihood strategies and increases their access to savings and loans through the formation of savings groups.
- Since 2009, USAID/BHA has supported the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to deploy chatty beetles—satellite terminals that facilitate text messaging in remote areas with limited connectivity—to disseminate hydrometeorological alerts and other important information. The messaging system connects emergency response authorities with remote communities in Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu. Chatty beetles provided to the Government of Tonga were critical to disseminating alerts to outer islands following the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha‘apai volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami.
- USAID/BHA also funds emergency response activities addressing the humanitarian needs of people affected by disasters such as cyclones, droughts, and volcanic eruptions. Following the eruption of the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha‘apai Volcano and subsequent tsunami waves in early 2022, USAID/BHA provided \$2.6 million to partners throughout Tonga to meet critical humanitarian needs. With USAID/BHA support, NGO Act for Peace provided agriculture, protection, and WASH support, as well as multipurpose cash assistance to 18 communities in Tonga. Act for Peace and local partner the Tonga National Council of Churches also worked to promote food production to replace damaged crops, provide psychosocial support services to help affected communities cope with recurring disasters, and support water access for communities in need. Additionally, USAID/BHA partner CRS partnered with Caritas Tonga to address the critical WASH needs of 1,000 vulnerable households in Tonga’s ‘Eua, Ha‘apai, and Tongatapu island groups. CRS is working to rehabilitate and install water tanks to meet water supply needs, distribute WASH items, and carry out hygiene promotion to meet the priority needs of households impacted by the volcanic eruptions and tsunami waves.
- In response to severe drought conditions in Kiribati, USAID/BHA provided \$450,000 to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to distribute safe drinking water and other critical WASH supplies to households on Kiribati’s Gilbert and South Tarawa islands. In addition, USAID/BHA—in collaboration with the U.S. Coast Guard—provided in-kind WASH commodities including buckets and water containers, as well as more than 15,000 liters of safe drinking water, to UNICEF for onward distribution to affected communities on Kiritimati Island. In total, UNICEF is working to ensure that more than 20,000 beneficiaries across affected islands have access to safe drinking water and approximately 100,000 beneficiaries receive messaging on water conservation, household water treatment and storage, and the health effects of droughts.
- In Papua New Guinea, USAID/BHA provided \$3.2 million in FY 2022 funding to partner organizations to address the urgent humanitarian needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and survivors of violence. USAID/BHA partner the International Organization for Migration is working to support IDPs in Papua New Guinea’s Highlands with the delivery of dignity kits and hygiene supplies, emergency shelter support, and in-kind food assistance. Additionally, with USAID/BHA support, the UN Population Fund is providing IDPs with sexual and reproductive health assistance, as well as protection support focused on the prevention of and response to GBV. USAID/BHA is also

supporting CARE to provide food, psychosocial support, and shelter assistance for IDPs, and UNDP to provide humanitarian coordination support to the emergency response.

USAID/BHA Funding in the Pacific Islands ¹			
	Emergency ²	ER4	TOTAL
FY 2021	\$558,212	\$7,120,000	\$7,678,212
FY 2022	\$5,560,365	\$7,299,785	\$12,860,150

¹ Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of September 30, 2022. Totals include estimated value of food assistance and transportation costs at time of procurement, subject to change.

² Includes funding for programs that integrate ER4 activities with emergency response.