



UNICEF emergency supplies bound for Kiribati (© WFP Pacific/2022)

Pacific Islands Multi-Country Office

Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1 on Drought in Kiribati and Tuvalu

As of 08 Aug 2022 (2pm FJT)


for every child

Highlights

- La Niña is causing prolonged drought in equatorial Pacific, particularly in Kiribati and Tuvalu. Kiribati has proclaimed a state of emergency while Tuvalu has formally requested assistance from the UN.
- UNICEF is providing technical support to the Government of Kiribati in the development of the government drought response plan, sector coordination, rapid assessment, data collection and analysis, and outreach and community engagement. UNICEF is engaging with the Government of Tuvalu to support their drought response plan.
- UNICEF has also delivered 27 metric tons of WASH supplies to Kiribati, including household kits, water containers, purifying tablets and portable water testing kits.
- The Governments of Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Japan have also provided material and financial support to the drought response in Kiribati.

Situation in Numbers

Number of people in need of humanitarian assistance



Kiribati:
94,000 people

Tuvalu:
9,200 people

Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

La Niña conditions were observed in the equatorial Pacific starting in November 2021. Since then, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tokelau, and Nauru have experienced high water stress because of low rainfall and dry conditions. This situation is expected to persist as La Niña is predicted to continue until the last quarter of 2022¹. On 11 June 2022, the Government of Kiribati proclaimed a state of disaster to manage and respond to the impact of the drought. This came in the wake of the reported high salinity levels of water in key monitoring wells and the forecast for below average rainfall in the coming months. The drought outlook is most concerning for islands in the Gilbert group, most notably in South/North Tarawa and the southern islands, including Maiana, Kuria, Abemama, Aranuka, Nonouti, Beru, Tabiteuea, Nikunau, Onotoa, Tamana, and Arorae. Over 94,000 people or 79% of Kiribati's total population live on these islands. The Governments of Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Japan have provided support to the drought response, which includes, among others, the provision of solar distillation units, repair of desalination plants, delivery of drinking water, and provision of jerry cans and water purifiers.

In Tuvalu, two of its islands (Nanumea, Nui) have been declared in drought conditions, four (Nanumaga, Niutao, Nukufetu, Funafuti) are in drought warning, and three (Vaitupu, Nukulaelae, Niulakita) under drought watch (not included in beneficiary numbers). Some 9,200 people or 86% of Tuvalu's population are under drought or drought warning conditions. The Government of Tuvalu has developed their drought response plan and have formally asked the UN for support. Their plan

¹ [ICU_JAS_2022.pdf \(niwa.co.nz\)](#)

is composed of two aspects: one is the immediate response which involves provision of reverse osmosis (RO) machines to generate fresh water in critical areas; and the other involves early anticipatory actions, including strategic deployment of RO units, conduct of household surveys and water soundings, maintenance of water storage and community wells, and WASH outreach targeting children.

Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination

The Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT), which is co-led by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and composed of UN agencies and international NGOs, is leading the coordination with the Government of Kiribati and the diplomatic missions. The UNRCO covering Kiribati is based in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), while the UNRCO responsible for Tuvalu as well as the PHT are based in Suva, Fiji. Under the PHT are nine clusters wherein UNICEF is the lead in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), co-lead with Save the Children in Education, co-lead with World Health Organization (WHO) in Health & Nutrition, and the lead for Child Protection in the Protection cluster. UNICEF maintains a field office in Kiribati and heads the UN Joint Presence Office.

In Kiribati, the Office of te Beretitenti (President) has overall responsibility on government actions on disasters and climate. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is under it and acts as its operational arm. The Kiribati National Expert Group on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (KNEG), composed of directors from different ministries as well as the meteorological service, police, national red cross society, and NGOs, acts as an advisory body to the national government. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Energy (MISE) is the lead for WASH sector coordination.

In Tuvalu, the National Disaster Council (NDC) is the principal executing body for disaster response at national level, acting on behalf of the cabinet. The NDC serves as an advisory body to the cabinet on strategic decisions, e.g., the need for international assistance. It is chaired by the Secretary of Home Affairs with members representing government ministries, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO, Red Cross, etc. and with NDMO as the council secretariat.

Funding Overview and Partnerships

UNICEF developed a drought response plan for Kiribati after a series of discussions and consultations with the Office of te Beretitenti and key ministries. The plan outlines UNICEF support to the government response efforts and is focused on hygiene promotion, safe water storage and water treatment. The UNICEF drought plan for Kiribati has a budget of \$2,169,720 of which about \$500,000 or 23%, have been funded. USAID contributed \$424,000 to support ground water assessment, provision of life-saving WASH supplies and installation of desalination units.

In Tuvalu, the government has developed an operational plan of which UNICEF aims to support its outcomes for operations of Reverse Osmosis (RO) and water distribution. UNICEF drought response plan for Tuvalu has a budget of \$459,000 of which \$100,000, or 22%, have been funded. The government has formally requested the UN for assistance and presented their plan to the donor community last 5 August.

UNICEF Pacific thanks USAID for its pledge to support the response through contributions, particularly towards response actions and urgent needs in the WASH sector. In addition, UNICEF Pacific appreciates all donors who have provided flexible resources through the Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund, which has enabled UNICEF Pacific to address the most urgent needs from the start.

UNICEF Programme Response

UNICEF has an extensive WASH programme in Kiribati with ongoing work to build capacity of emergency WASH response at subnational level. This drought response is firmly integrated in its development programming. Technical support is being provided to the Kiribati NDMO, the Public Utilities Board (PUB), MISE, and the Ministry of Line and Phoenix Islands Development (MLPID) in the development of the government drought response plan, sector coordination, rapid assessment, data collection and analysis, and outreach and community engagement. The UNICEF drought response plan for Kiribati aims to reach at least 50,000 people, around 40% of the country's total population, including those living in South Tarawa and the outer islands. As part of the plan, the following prepositioned supplies from Suva and Brisbane warehouses were sent to Kiribati:

- 1,500 household WASH kits
- 2,000 water containers
- 40,000 water purifying tablets (Aquatabs)
- 3 portable water testing laboratory kits

These items were delivered through the Pacific Humanitarian Air Service (PHAS) managed by the Pacific Logistics Cluster and through a chartered flight courtesy of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). UNICEF also facilitated the access of two US Coast Guard ships that delivered drinking water and water supplies in Tarawa and Kiritimati.

In Tuvalu, UNICEF is coordinating its response with the government and CSOs. A support plan has been developed, and based upon confirmation of specific needs actions will be initiated through procurement of essential equipment and partnerships with CSOs.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

Social media

[Radio New Zealand interview by the Chief of Field Office on the drought situation](#)

[Life-saving supplies packed and ready to be transported to Kiribati](#)

[Thanks to WFP, UNICEF supplies reach Kiribati](#)

Website

[11 tons of critical relief supplies arrive in Kiribati to support on-going drought response](#)

Further situation reports will be released as the situation evolves and / or needs are identified.

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