



WFP's Pacific Humanitarian Air Service and the Red Cross join forces to deliver relief to typhoon-devastated Palau

AIRAI, Palau: Relief aid is arriving in Palau after Typhoon Surigae left a trail of destruction across the tiny island state of Palau, damaging some 1500 homes, destroying roads, and cutting off water and power supplies.

To transport vital relief supplies from stockpiles in Kuala Lumpur to remote affected communities, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) have joined forces.

The collaboration includes IFRC relief supplies, along with 400 family kits donated by the Government of Australia brought in from WFP-managed UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, using the Pacific Humanitarian Air Service also managed by WFP. USAID offered humanitarian assistance worth US\$ 100,000 towards IFRC relief supplies.

The first relief flight – carrying the family kits, 150 kitchen sets, 1422 buckets, 1500 blankets and 1300 jerry cans – arrived in Palau on 06 May. These supplies are now being distributed by Palau Red Cross to communities on the main and outer islands, often traveling by small boats. Other international flights will follow as part of an ongoing relief and recovery effort.

The first typhoon of the season, Typhoon Surigae caused widespread damage across the main and outer islands of Palau, with wind gusts of up to 135km/h cutting of water and power supplies, and landslides making roads impassable. According to estimates, more than 1,500 homes were damaged and some 150 destroyed when the typhoon hit on 13 April.

Palau Red Cross Executive Director, Maireng Sengebau, said: "The typhoon has been a staggering blow to communities across the country. It's important we get relief to them as quickly as possible as many households were already vulnerable due to the economic hardships of the COVID-19 lockdown. We have

done a lot of preparations in recent years, and we had relief items pre-positioned to respond, but it hasn't been enough."

"The Pacific is a vast region and the fastest and most effective way to deliver aid is by air. The disruption to supply chains caused by the pandemic are hitting the region particularly hard," said Cynthia Jones, Director a.i. of WFP's Office in the Pacific.

"WFP's dedicated humanitarian air service makes it possible for the Pacific governments and the international community to bring supplies and personnel to where they are needed the most," she added.

Katie Greenwood, Head of IFRC's Pacific Delegation, said building links between Red Cross National Societies and other humanitarian partners was central to the delegation's work. "Partnerships that bring together governments and international organisations to support local agencies like Palau Red Cross are a crucial part of responding to emergencies across the Pacific. They are a key part in this international partnership and humanitarian chain."

The WFP-managed Pacific humanitarian air service is an example of an important collaboration between key partners and organisations in compiling resources and skills to respond to the pandemic as well as natural disasters across the Pacific region. With generous funding from the Government of Australia, the European Union and USAID, the Pacific humanitarian flights continue to transport relief supplies and medical equipment to where they are most needed.

For media interviews contact:

Allyne Andrew from Palau Red Cross Society: ph +680 488 5781; email comms@palauredcross.org

Maria Shumusti from WFP: ph +61 498 728 143 email maria.shumusti@wfp.org

Joe Cropp from IFRC: ph +61 (0) 491 743 089; email joe.cropp@ifrc.org