1. National context

The Kingdom of Tonga, the oldest and last remaining hereditary constitutional Polynesian monarchy, is a narrow archipelago of 170 islands, stretching 500 kilometres and situated slightly north of the Tropic of Capricorn. Its status as a British protectorate ended in 1970 when it became an independent state within the Commonwealth. Its landmass is less than 700 square kilometres. The largest population is on the island of Tongatapu where the capital city of Nuku'alofa is situated. Only 36 of the 170 islands in the Tonga archipelago are populated. The economy is based mainly on subsistence agriculture with an estimated 70 per cent of the population dependent upon it for their livelihood.

It is situated in an area of the South Pacific that is prone to cyclones, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Public health services are provided through national hospitals, health centres and public health nurse clinics. Traditional medicine is used to complement Western medicine and involves the use of bark and leaves to produce oral medicine and skin potions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital:</th>
<th>Nuku’alofa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GNP per capita:</td>
<td>US$ 1,790 (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy:</td>
<td>72 years (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate:</td>
<td>19 per 1,000 live births (1997)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate:</td>
<td>99 per cent (1995)</td>
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</table>

2. Foundation

Mission

The constitution of the Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS) sets out the general objectives of the society, which are to relieve suffering, distress and sickness in times of peace, disasters and armed conflict. The alleviation of suffering is to be achieved by providing services and educational opportunities to the disabled, first-aid training, disaster preparedness and relief, youth activities, HIV/AIDS and welfare services, and physiotherapy.

The society has a good relationship with the government, and cooperates with different departments, particularly in the fields of disaster preparedness and relief and health issues. The TRCS has its own disaster plan and sets an annual plan of action.

Legal base

The TRCS was founded in 1961 under the auspices of the British Red Cross. It ceased to be a branch of the British Red Cross in 1972 following dissolution of the British protectorate status. An act of parliament, passed in 1972, gave official government recognition to the TRCS. The society joined the Movement in 1979 and a new constitution was adopted and recognized by the Movement in 1981. The TRCS holds its annual general meeting every year to elect a new executive committee.

Constituency

Territorial coverage by TRCS is largely confined to the main islands of Tongatapu. Ofa Tui Amanaki (OTA) centre, Alonga centre and Petesaita centre are three branches in Nuku’alofa, which have been established to provide services and education to the disabled. These branches do not participate in other traditional branch activities such as disaster preparedness or dissemination. There are no branches in rural parts of Tongatapu. The branch of Vava’u is being developed but the other outer island branches have been inactive for some time. The society’s project proposals for 2002-2003 include branch development as one of the highest priorities. Most of the programme activities are undertaken from the headquarters, with staff travelling to rural villages and outer islands when finance permits.

The society has approximately 300 members, 200 of whom are young people. There is a strong tradition of commitment to the involvement of young people in its membership, and Red Cross youth are the most visible of all members and volunteers. The main youth activities are first aid, conducting health awareness campaigns and training for the benefit of other young people, and fund-raising. The youth members are the chief driving force in all of the society’s activities, and their services as standby first-aid teams in natural or man-made disasters, especially, have been highly acknowledged in the country.

3. Capacity

Leadership

The annual general meeting is the highest authority of the TRCS. It is this body that elects the executive
Partnerships in profile 2002-2003

The queen holds the position of president and two of the princesses chair branches for the disabled. This royal support is a unifying and stabilizing influence for the TRCS and provides the main sources of leadership and strength. Since a new secretary general was appointed in 2000, the society’s leadership has flourished, and programmes and fund-raising efforts have been reinvigorated. Community respect for and involvement in the Red Cross has also increased substantially.

To support the capacity of the executive committee, four subcommittees have been formed: health and disaster; administration and fund-raising; welfare; and property.

While the committees’ functions and requirements are described in the constitution, the roles of the president and chairman are less clear.

Human resources
The society employs 22 staff members at both the national office and the branches for the disabled. There are currently six staff employed by the society at headquarters, namely the secretary general, first-aid field officer, blood coordinator, office clerk and two teachers for the hearing-impaired. Professional and technical assistance is sought from medical and nursing personnel if required. The field officer is primarily involved in the first-aid training and provision of first-aid services at sports events. A group of 20 volunteers is available to assist with this.

While leadership training has proven to be very successful, the problem of people leaving to go overseas once they are trained continues to be an issue. Training of trainers programmes continue with additional workshops and courses being planned for youth leaders as well as first-aid and HIV/AIDS instructors. First-aid training is available for members and volunteers when needed.

Financial resources
The society raised over CHF 19,423 (2001) in Tonga from its fund-raising activities, such as annual Red Cross ball and the Red Cross raffles supported by a private, corporate donation. Additional income is generated through fees paid for first-aid training and services along with the sales of first-aid kits and minimal income from renting the Red Cross hall.

The society is heavily reliant on the generosity and goodwill of its members and the community for financial and material donations. The financial management of the society is sound with regular reporting.

Material resources
The national office is accommodated in a two-storey building complex which also houses the Ofa Tui Amanaki (OTA) centre and the hearing-impaired school. The building is in poor condition and an engineer and auditor have recommended that it be demolished. A funding proposal has been presented for the building of new premises on the present site. There are four buildings at the Alonga and Petesaita centres. As all land in Tonga is owned by the crown, the TRCS leases its land. The society has a van, which is also in poor condition, as well as functioning communications equipment. However, it does not have a facsimile machine or radio equipment.

The society has two disaster preparedness containers with relief supplies in Nuku’alofa and Vava’u, which were provided by the International Federation with financial support from the Japanese Red Cross. The TRCS would like to place another container in Ha’apai if funding permits.

Organization/planning
The recent replacement of the executive committee and secretary general had a significant impact on the society’s performance. This change of leadership has led to the rebuilding of the society, the improvement of its programmes and its public image and profile with the business community and the public at large. Plan of action and project proposals for the next two years have been formulated in line with the International Federation’s Strategy 2010.

Partnerships
Overall, the society enjoys a good relationship with a number of community organizations and government departments, including the health department, national disaster management committee, the police and the defence service. The Australian Red Cross has provided core-cost support in the past. The society’s relationship with other National Societies both in and outside the region has been developed. The society enjoys consistent support from local private sectors and the media, which regularly covers its activities and helps it in dissemination. The Australian, Japanese and New Zealand Red Cross have been the main supporters of the society’s activities.

4. Performance

Activities
Disaster preparedness and response
The Tonga Red Cross works closely with the government and other relevant organizations in the field of disaster preparedness and response. The government has an official national disaster plan which recognizes the TRCS as a provider of relief and assistance in emergency and recovery tasks. The TRCS usually participates in the initial damage and needs assessments.

The society has its own disaster preparedness and response plan approved by the TRCS’s executive
committee in 2000. Disaster awareness training is undertaken by the society throughout the country every year. The society always liaises with the International Federation’s regional delegation in Suva (Fiji) for the assistance and advice in times of disasters.

The TRCS is often the only humanitarian organization that can assist the local government in its disaster relief efforts. Most recently, Tropical Cyclone Waka hit the northern island group of Vava’u in early January 2002, causing minor injuries to some of the island’s residents and severe damage to property and crops. In response, the Red Cross sent personnel to the islands to distribute relief supplies stocked in its disaster preparedness containers, such as tarpaulins, hurricane lamps, fuel, candles and even chainsaws to clear the roads.

First aid
One of the society’s main roles is to provide necessary training for the prevention of injuries and the reduction of the number of casualties. In order to achieve this goal, the TRCS has conducted first-aid training throughout Tonga. In 2001, 64 first-aid classes were organized for various organizations, including the ministry of education, the Tonga visitors bureau, the Tonga Maritime Polytechnic Institute, colleges and banks. First-aid courses are also provided for the general public, churches, youth and religious groups. Several courses were organized in the outer island groups as well. The society’s proposal for an industrial safety and first-aid service has been funded by the Australian Red Cross.

TRCS first-aid teams are on hand at rugby tournaments and other sports events. The teams are also ready to respond in case of man-made or natural disasters.

Blood donor recruitment
The society approved the appointment of the blood coordinator to work at the Vaiola government hospital. The main objective is to promote and recruit volunteers for blood donation at the hospital’s blood bank. Technical aspects of this pilot operation are being managed by the ministry of health. During 2000, the TRCS blood coordinator was able to assist with the collection 1,071 units of blood. The New Zealand Red Cross funds the salary of the blood coordinator.

Social welfare
The Tonga Red Cross operates services for the disabled. The Alonga and Petesaita centres provide supervision, care, physical therapy and home-care services for approximately 40 adults with physical and mental disabilities. The Ofa Tui Amanaki (OTA) centre provides recreation and education for approximately 58 handicapped children from pre-school age to 18 years. The society also operates a special school for deaf children. Volunteers working with children from the hearing-impaired school also assist a national aid programme for vulnerable individuals in mending and sorting clothes, blankets, and distributing crutches and milk powder for babies.

The TRCS responds to occasional tracing enquiries. In 2001, the society successfully assisted a child from the United States in tracing her father. In addition, the society assisted families who lost their homes to fires.

Dissemination
While the TRCS has no particular training programme on IHL, it occasionally serves as a provider of basic information on IHL for the Tonga defence services. The dissemination of the Fundamental Principles is included in first-aid, disaster preparedness and leadership training courses. The principles have been translated into Tongan and are available as a poster. Radio programmes aimed at publicizing Red Cross activities and educating the public are aired regularly on a variety of topics including first aid and disaster preparedness.

Youth
There is an active youth group of 40 members on Tongatapu. Activities include first-aid services, health and HIV/AIDS programmes and assistance in the society’s fund-raising. They also provide a weekly service at the main headquarters to clean and maintain the property.

Physiotherapist
There are only two physiotherapists in Tonga, one of whom works for the society, the other for the ministry of health. The physiotherapist at TRCS is seconded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and works mainly at the OTA and Alonga centres and the hearing-impaired school, but has also worked with the rugby committee. Individuals may also make appointments at the TRCS main office in Nuku’alofa. Recognizing the importance of this service to the community, the society is continuing it with assistance from the Japanese government.

5. Further information

TRCS action plan 2000
Tonga Red Cross Society Annual Report (2000)
Tonga National Disaster Plan for 2000