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Samoa

Disaster Response

Volunteer

Information Guide

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1. Introduction

On 30 September 2009 (NZ time), four powerful tsunamis generated by an undersea 8.0 magnitude (Richter) earthquake crashed into Western Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga destroying palm trees, beaches and coastal villages. The waves killed 189 people, 31 in American Samoa, 9 in Tonga and 149 in Western Samoa, including 7 New Zealanders.

The emergency relief stage is largely completed as of early November 2009, and the time for rebuilding has come. Assessments indicate that 425 transitional shelter houses are needed in Samoa while 79 are needed in Tonga.

The Samoan Government has been assessing how many families have lost their homes and are in need of having them rebuilt. Many families no longer wish to live on the coast, raising issues of land tenure and resettlement further inland. The Samoan Government has addressed this issue quite quickly and we were able to start construction on the Fales (traditional house). Which villages should be rebuilt first, and for which families? There will not be easy answers to any of this.

2. Rebuilding Homes in Samoa

The Samoan Government has requested Habitat for Humanity New Zealand (HFHNZ) to oversee the rebuilding of approximately 325 Fale. Caritas Samoa has also requested HFHNZ to build approximately 25 Fale for them. These 350 Fale will be 90% funded by those organisations, and built under the project management leadership of HFHNZ. Other organisations like the LDS Church and Catholic Diocese are funding and building their own 75 Fale. We expect the number may grow still, as some families have not yet had their names recorded on the master list of those who lost their home in the tsunami.

A Fale is a traditional Samoan home with concrete floor, timber trusses and iron roof, supported by multiple poles. The Government has sanctioned that all rebuilt Fale will be one standard design, which is 10 metres long by 5.2 metres wide. One end will be a cyclone resistant hip roof, and the other end a gable roof so that this structure can be easily added onto and expanded in size later on by the family occupants. The roof will have strapping to make it cyclone resistant. There will be an outside ablution block with shower and flush toilet, and ideally a water tank for supply of rain water to be collected from the roof, for both purposes. At this stage there is still a shortage of funding for around 200 water tanks to ensure all 425 Fale have this provision met.

The Fale building programme is the urgent first response of the Samoan Government to provide shelter to as many families as possible. Some damaged homes may be able to be repaired, and nicer homes will no doubt also be rebuilt over time by those families that can afford them. HFHNZ is only partnering with the Government in the first response Fale rebuilding.

HFHNZ have set up an HRC (Habitat Resource Centre) at Lepa on the southeast coast of Upolu, closest to the hardest hit areas by the tsunami. The HRC is designed to have all building materials delivered there, timber cut, rebar cut, poles cut, trusses manufactured, such that a core kitset house can be delivered to the final site and quickly erected.

The Samoan Government has received a lot of aid funds from both Aus Aid and NZ Aid, who have stipulated that all purchased building materials, should be bought from local suppliers in Samoa, not in NZ or Australia. Their aim is to stimulate the local economy rather than potentially harm it by bringing in so many materials from overseas. Any donated (free of charge) building materials are however welcomed from other countries.

HFHNZ is supplying the tools and equipment to facilitate the rebuilding programme, both at the HRC and on house sites, as well as the labour from hundreds of Kiwi volunteers. We are also funding what we see as “gaps” in the costing provided by the Samoan Government of each Fale. There is no allowance, for instance, for site preparation. To this HFHNZ is funding about 10% of each Fale cost, and public donations towards this are still being sought.

3. Volunteer Considerations

- We envisage having Kiwis working with local Samoans during the rebuilding process, to ensure that empowerment and skills’ training takes place at the same time as construction. We therefore want skilled NZ tradespersons (mainly **Builders, Carpenters, Plumbers, Electricians, Drain layers**) to go to Samoa to ensure we build to best practice standards and pass on skills in so doing. Each Kiwi tradesperson can be accompanied by a Kiwi non-tradesperson. It is also very helpful to have “**handymen**” (includes handy ladies) who have had some construction experience to help unskilled volunteers.
- Over an 8 month period (November 2009 to June 2010) we will need to complete 2 Fale per working day or 10 per week, to complete our 350 Fale. We have shipped equipment (digger and vehicles and tools) from New Zealand to make this goal easier. We estimate it could require between 400 to 600 Kiwi volunteers over that time frame or roughly 40 to 50 volunteers in Samoa at any one time.
- This means we will need 200 to 300 tradespersons, plus at least 150 Handymen, plus another 50 to 150 Unskilled Volunteers.
- Not everyone can go at the same time; we need to spread everyone out for this project to work optimally. See section on dates further below.
- Volunteers need to be reasonably fit and healthy. Anyone with existing medical conditions should check with their personal Doctor to ensure participation will not adversely affect their health and wellbeing. Volunteers should check with their local NZ Travel Doctor regarding vaccinations required and any health precautions to be taken.
- Volunteers need to be willing to “rough it”. Beds are mattresses on a concrete floor, showers are cold water only, food is cooked for a large group, there are bugs and mosquitoes and it is hot during the day.
- Along with our Registration Form you will be asked to identify your experience level on a Questionnaire so that HFHNZ can ensure there is always a good balance of skilled tradespersons, handymen and unskilled volunteers in Samoa at any one time.
- HFHNZ has employed Staff on site in Samoa, as well as a Kiwi Team Leader (also a volunteer) for each and every group that travels to Samoa. The Habitat staff on site include Leifa, Simi, Leu, Latu, and Max. Volunteers must be willing to accept their leadership and comply with all reasonable instructions relative to work, health and safety, team relationships, and cultural considerations.
- Volunteers must commit to participate for ideally a minimum two week period. Exceptions can be made but logistics and costs will need working out individually.
- Volunteers must be willing to pay their own way. Details of costs are provided in sections further down this document.
- Volunteers must be 18 years of age or older.

4. Dates & Team Schedules

- Teams will overlap. For instance, Team 1 will go in Week 1, Team 2 in Week 2, Team 3 in Week 3 whilst Team 1 comes home at the end of Week 2, and so on, so there will always be two teams in Samoa at one time.
- If you can stay in Samoa longer than two weeks, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Devie Milward on 09-579-4111 extension 209 and let her know that. She can

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- If any Volunteer wishes to undertake some sightseeing or tourism on weekends, Habitat will endeavour to help, however there may be a cost of rental and petrol for which an individual or a group of volunteers may be asked to pay for.
- HFHNZ has shipped over a few vehicles, as in four wheel drive utilities and light trucks, for transport to and from the work sites.

7. Accommodation

- The Church Hall in Lepa has been made available for our use to accommodate all volunteers. It is on a hill overlooking the beach where many homes were destroyed by the tsunami.
- An additional ablution block (extra showers and toilets) has been completed by the first team of Kiwi builders that were in Lepa in early November.
- Arrangements are fairly basic, with mattresses on the floor. Please take your own sheets, pillow, towels, and mosquito net.
- If any Volunteer wishes to stay at a Hotel in Apia on the weekend, this will be at their personal cost and is not included in the HFHNZ Volunteer Cost.

8. Food

- Meals will be provided in the Church Hall. The local Samoan community are doing all the cooking for the NZ Volunteer teams.
- If you have any special dietary requirements you need to inform us; every effort will be made to accommodate such but there may be extra costs involved, and some items may not be able to be met.
- If you have any favourite snacks you will need to bring them with you or purchase in local stores at your own cost.
- If any Volunteer wishes to undertake tourism or visit Apia or other locations on the weekends, all meals (food and drinks) not taken in the Lepa Church Hall are at personal cost and are not included in the HFHNZ Volunteer Cost.

9. Insurance

- Volunteers are required to arrange and separately pay for their own travel insurance. You will need this to cover potential losses on the trip, whether bags, cash, cards, personal belongings or other. This cost is not part of the HFHNZ Volunteer Cost.
- Volunteers are automatically signed up for the HFH International's nominated medical insurer, Chubb Medex. This cost is \$4 per day and is included in the HFHNZ Volunteer Cost noted below, based on a two week trip to Samoa. Longer stays will be charged at \$4 per day.

10. Packing Suggestions

General Clothing:

- Underclothing and socks for at least 5 days
- Long sleeve shirt/sweatshirt or light jacket/hat/rain gear/sunglasses
- Sandals/jandals or flip flops for shower
- Casual for relaxing in evenings & wear around Samoa when not working

- Swim suit & towel

Work Clothing:

- Work boots for building site / gumboots for concrete work / old sandshoes
- Four changes of work clothes
- Men: Shorts or long pants, short sleeve cotton shirts or t-shirts
- Women: may work in pants below the knee, or in skirts, shortsleeve cotton shirts or t-shirts, but no sleeveless shirts or tank tops/singlets. Bring a lava lava to cover up as needed (available in Samoa). In some villages it might be inappropriate to wear pants into someone's house.

Church Attire:

- Sandals or dress shoes
- Men: Long pants, short sleeve cotton shirt with collar (tie optional)
- Women: Dress or long skirt and blouse (skirt should be mid-calf length or longer)

Evening Wear: a nicer shirt and shorts or long pants

Personal Items:

- Sunscreen / Insect repellent / Flashlight / Water Bottle
- Toiletries (no electrical outlets in bathrooms)
- Prescription medicines
- An old towel or two (they dry faster) and washcloth
- Bedding (2 sheets, and an extra one for cover or use as a light blanket)
- Small pillow and pillow case
- Earplugs are important for sleeping. Village life is noisy (roosters can crow all night).
- Diarrhoea medication (Imodium or other) & gastrolyte
- Prickly heat powder
- Small first aid kit, including antibiotic ointment and plenty of plasters. Even minor wounds must be covered to avoid infection. Bring cloth style plasters that stay on sweaty skin.
- Anti-fungal powder (during the rainy season just starting, body fungal infections are common).
- Anti-itch cream for bites.
- Betadyne (iodine)
- Antiseptic hand sanitizer – small bottle can be carried everywhere you go
- Mosquito net – no malaria but dengue fever is a possibility, plus other bugs.
- Bible/devotional material/reading material/journal/writing materials/book or two to read
- Camera
- Snacks
- Cash for personal spending funds
- Credit Card – there are ATM machines in Apia but not in Lepa
- Internet facilities are limited in Apia, there are none in Lepa. This is not a place to consider bringing your laptop, we recommend you leave it behind.

11. Optional Tourism

- At the conclusion of the building trip to Samoa, some Volunteers may choose to stay longer and tour the country or see the local sights. There may be a slight surcharge for any changes to airline tickets. Volunteers may also choose to undertake some tourism on a weekend between building working weeks; all costs of any tourism are not included in the HFHNZ Volunteer Fee.
- Samoans generally do not work on Saturday or Sunday. HFHNZ are looking at ways to facilitate building on Saturday should there be a lot of rain mid-week, such that we may

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work on a Saturday to catch up on work, this is subject to permission being granted by the local Village leaders.

- Sunday is very special to Samoans, and NZ Volunteers regardless of varying personal beliefs, should expect to attend the local Church as a matter of courtesy to the Samoans. No work is to be undertaken at all on a Sunday, which is the Samoan way.

12. HFHNZ Volunteer Cost

- The HFHNZ Volunteer Cost for a standard two week trip to Samoa is \$1,200. This is payable to HFHNZ before you travel to Samoa. The purpose of this HFHNZ Volunteer Cost is to cover all expenses associated with your working trip. Habitat asks all Volunteers to pay their own way, so that Habitat funds can be used for building homes, purchasing of tools, equipment and for project management related expenses.
- This HFHNZ Volunteer Cost covers a two week trip to Samoa, and includes:
 - ✓ Return international airfare Auckland to Apia on Air New Zealand
 - ✓ Samoa airport Departure Tax when returning to NZ
 - ✓ Accommodation at the Lepa Church Hall
 - ✓ Three meals per day at the Lepa Church Hall (or lunch at worksite)
 - ✓ Medical insurance with Chubb Medex
 - ✓ Airport transfers and work related transportation in Samoa
 - ✓ Administration charge for HFHNZ arranging documentation, processing, scheduling and medical insurance.
 - ✓ Assistance from a paid Volunteer Coordinator in Samoa with culture and language
 - ✓ Habitat t-shirts (it is important to be recognised as a Habitat Volunteer by the Samoan villages where you will be building homes).
- The HFHNZ Volunteer Cost excludes inoculations, medications, travel insurance and any tourism. Travel by Air NZ from elsewhere in NZ at \$100 is payable as an extra.
- The HFHNZ Volunteer Cost is a tax deductible donation, and a receipt will be issued to you.

13. Registration Process & Information Required

- All interested people wanting to Volunteer for rebuilding homes with HFHNZ in Samoa, need to complete a number of documents. Despite the paperwork involved, please consider this as very important. We do not know most of you, or your level of expertise, and there are issues of risk mitigation, personal and team security, health and safety, medical insurance and other reasons. This is all for your personal safety as well as that of your team members and the Samoan community. We trust you understand.
- The following documents require completion and sending in to us. They are all available to be downloaded from our website, www.habitat.org.nz

- 1) HFH International Registration Form & Waiver
- 2) HFH NZ Questionnaire, inclusive provision of several references
- 3) A Photocopy of your Passport inside front cover page, with photo & details

Contact:

Devie Milward, Project Samoa Hope Volunteer Coordinator

Habitat for Humanity NZ – National Support Centre

Level 1, Tower 2, 646 Great South Rd., Ellerslie

PO Box 112387, Auckland 1642

Ph: 09-579-4111 ext 209

Fax: 09-579-4112

Email: DMilward@habitat.org.nz

Visit our website: www.habitat.org.nz

14. Payment Information

- The easiest payment method is to go to our website, www.habitat.org.nz, click on the button which says “click here to donate” below Project Samoa Hope.
- When the donation page opens, please complete all sections, and in the drop down box at the bottom which gives you choices of where to give your donation, please select “Samoa Volunteer Cost”.
- If you are unable to pay by credit card in the above manner, please call our office on 09-579-4111 ext 209 and speak to Devie Milward about other payment options.

15. Country Information

- A search on Google will bring up many interesting and informative websites to introduce you to Samoa, its people and culture.
- One such helpful website is <http://www.samoa.travel/default.aspx>
- HFHNZ has a Samoan staff member acting as our Volunteer Coordinator in Samoa. They will pick you up at the airport, deliver you to Lepa, and assist you with any and all cultural and language understandings necessary during your stay in Samoa.

16. Habitat for Humanity Information

The vision of **Habitat for Humanity International** (HFHI) is the elimination of poverty housing worldwide. Operating internationally in over 90 countries, since 1976 HFHI has housed over 325,000 families and is now housing families at the rate of 60,000 per annum, with a goal of housing 100,000 per annum by 2013. HFHI also operates in Disaster Relief focusing primarily on emergency and long term shelter plus water and sanitation.

HFHI is currently responding to multiple disasters in the Asia Pacific region, inclusive floods in Manila, Philippines, typhoon damage in central Vietnam (330,000 homes destroyed) and earthquake damage in Padang, Indonesia. HFHI has had considerable experience in recent years in Disaster Response, namely after the South Asia tsunami of December 2004, the Pakistan earthquake of 2005, Yogyakarta earthquake of 2006, and Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar 2008. Visit www.habitat.org for more information about HFHI.

Habitat for Humanity New Zealand (HFH NZ) is the national organisation which supports the housing of families through twelve Affiliates located from Northland to Invercargill. A National Support Centre (NSC) office is located in Auckland which supports the financial, marketing, fundraising, administration, global volunteer teams, and provides support and leadership to the Affiliates. Habitat NZ started in 1993 and has housed 347 families to date.

HFH NZ plays a leadership role in mentoring housing operations throughout the Pacific Islands, through Habitat organisations (Fiji) or in partnership with local housing organisations in other countries.

HFH NZ seeks to be the primary NGO supporting the Samoan community in partnership with the NZ Government and other NGO's, for the repair and construction of emergency and long term shelter inclusive of water and sanitation.

Visit www.habitat.org.nz for more information about HFH NZ.

17. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **What inoculations do I need for Samoa?**

Please go see your local GP or Travel Doctor, and get appropriate advice on inoculations and medications. If you have existing medical conditions, please ensure you get your Doctors permission to go to Samoa. We understand there is no risk of Malaria in Samoa, but there is a risk of Dengue Fever. Obtain your Doctor's advice.

- **Is Medical Insurance Required?**

Yes. HFHI require all international Volunteers to take our medical insurance with Medex. We have a serious commitment to risk management and assume everyone will be willing to comply. I enclose details of this insurance available at about \$4 per day, payable with your registration form. You need to arrange separate travel insurance for everything else like baggage loss and other potential things that may happen, at your own cost.

- **Is Travel Insurance Required?**

No, this is entirely up to you. However we strongly recommend you obtain such anytime you travel overseas, including Samoa. Habitat can take no responsibility for protection of your personal property, and any loss you may occur Habitat will not be responsible for.

- **How will I fit in with Habitat's Christian emphasis, if I am not a Christian?**

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian organisation who believes in demonstrating love to our neighbours. We are "non-proselytising" but do believe in loving people through our actions and words. People of all faiths and no faith may join us in the cause of addressing poverty housing and in this disaster reconstruction programme in Samoa, but are asked to respect the values of the organisation, especially when relating to other team members and the people of Samoa. Samoa is also a strong Christian nation and if you go there you are asked to show respect to their ways at all times.

- **I just want to go to Samoa to help. Is all this paperwork necessary?**

Yes. There are legal, medical, health and safety and risk mitigation issues involved. You need to thoroughly complete our attached Registration Form and Waiver. If information is lacking we cannot let you go to Samoa under our oversight. An HFH NZ Questionnaire is also enclosed. Please complete this and return to us asap, so that we know your level of experience, your preferred dates of travel, and provide us with a few contacts for us to obtain a verbal reference from.

- **Do I need to take any tools?**

We wish you could, but Air New Zealand does have a weight allowance of 20 kg for checked baggage. We have had a bulk shipment of tools and equipment to Samoa from NZ, and now have plenty of tools. It is helpful to still bring your own tool belt if you have one with two hammers. One can be given to the local Samoan you are working with. .

- **Can I stay and work in Samoa for a longer period than two weeks?**

Yes. We would appreciate this immensely, for those of you that can do this. There will be a cost involved (food, etc), and we are happy to work this through with you on an individual scenario basis. Please discuss with Devie Milward.

