



**MINISTRY OF RURAL AND MARITIME DEVELOPMENT AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

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**\*\* For Immediate Release \*\***

**Joint Government teams complete damage assessments in Lau**



***Caption: Soldiers from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) with children of Nukuni Village in Lau during the distribution of immediate relief supplies by Government last week.***

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**SUVA** – Damage assessments in the six islands in Lau that were recently impacted by the eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano in Tonga have been completed.

The two joint Government teams who were deployed to these islands onboard the MV Iloilovatu and the MLC Veivueti returned to Suva this week.

The teams which comprised of technical and scientific expertise from the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Environment, the Water Authority of Fiji and the Ministry of Fisheries had visited the islands of Vanuabalavu, Lakeba, Moala, Ono-I-Lau, Vatoa and Moce. They had completed the assessments and monitoring of the air and water quality, marine resources and food security in the six affected islands. The teams also included personnel from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and other key agencies of Government.

Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management Hon. Inia Seruiratu confirmed that reports received from the two teams indicated minimal damage were recorded across the six islands.

“Out of the six affected islands, Moce was identified as the only island that sustained damage to a few homes and crops,” Hon. Seruiratu said.

“Despite this, I can confirm that upon the completion of the assessments conducted by all key agencies deployed to Lau, the water and air quality level remains normal. While there were reports of slight damage to corals and reefs on the island of Vatoa, there was no major damage to the marine ecosystems across all the six islands. This is good news as many of the villages in these islands depend on the sea for their daily livelihood.”

“In terms of food security, reports show zero crop damage across five islands assessed by the teams. This excludes the island of Moce. The Ministry of Agriculture is looking into the provision of assorted vegetable seeds to support food and nutrition security in these islands.”

Minister Seruiratu said it had been also noted that there had not been any outbreak of diseases or public health issues in the aftermath of the storm surge that swept through the six affected islands.

“The assessment teams had recorded some slight damage to road infrastructure in Vanuabalavu, Lakeba and Moala and the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) has confirmed that they will look into the issue of maintenance of these infrastructure,” he said.

As villagers on the islands visited by the two Government vessels recover from the aftermath of the impacts of the volcanic eruption, many have expressed gratitude towards Government’s immediate response and assistance.

During the 6-day deployment, the Government teams, with the assistance of the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) had also distributed food ration supplies and Non-Food Items (NFIs).

At the conclusion of the mission, more than 1,300 food ration packs were distributed to the affected families on the six islands.



Caption: ***Soldiers from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) arrive at Nukuni Village in Lau immediate relief supplies last week.***

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For press enquiries:

Aqela Susu, MRMDDM, Tel. +679 3216456/+679 9985670 , [aqela.susu@govnet.gov.fj](mailto:aqela.susu@govnet.gov.fj)

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