

PSST Newsletter November 2018

Malo e lelei (Hi) everyone,

On our (Peter, son Simon, and Taua) recent scoping trip to Tonga we achieved virtually all we set out to do and much more in a very busy and fruitful four days in Auckland and fifteen days on Tongatapu. It was such an amazing time that seemed as if someone (God) had gone before us preparing our way!



The trip really started for Peter in Taupo at a Medical conference with the keynote speaker talking on “Compassion”. This turned out to be not only most appropriate but useful and very encouraging.

Once in Auckland Peter spent time with the CEO of Habitat for Humanity (NZ), Alan Thorp, who has shared with us their engineered shelter drawings already approved by Tongan authorities and very similar to our own structures. We will quantify survey these plans (quantify building materials required) and use this to calculate materials to acquire and send with each shipment. Builders in Tonga can then work off these plans with minor variations as required. Alan also offered to store a secure container for us at Habitat’s Penrose depot in Auckland if needed.

Peter visited Wiri Pacific Timber and viewed kitset homes for the Pacific. These were not ideal to our purpose but Wiri Pacific were very willing to price shells and prefabricated or precut roof trusses of our own requirements, or provide timber and building materials at a competitive price and arrange shipping.

The power tool importer who promised us demonstration tools requested that we send him our “wish” list which has been done after consultation with Kevin Walker (local builder).

Murray Kerr (a retired pharmacist) of Medical Aid Abroad holds large quantities of donated medical supplies and current pharmaceuticals available for use in the Pacific should we come across a specific need.

Tonga



Once in Tonga the team visited the 2 families that we have already helped into a shelter. They have both gone on to make significant improvements to the simple safe shell we provided (i.e. added floors, windows, doors and even a toilet and shower block in one). This was exciting and very encouraging. Further strapping brace was provided for one building but both had been “tied down” well from roof purlins to foundations. Both families were very very happy and well motivated to improve their situation. The following 2 photos show these buildings still progressing.



The team had meetings with a significant number of government ministers and ministry CEO's to talk through how to help the most vulnerable. These included, NEMO, Infrastructure, Revenue, MEIDEC, Lands, Customs, and Health. We received amazing support from all government ministers and ministry CEO's. They have given us not only the list of 7,500 damaged homes by category (minor, moderate, major or destroyed), but also the vulnerability of the families concerned enabling us to more specifically focus on that group most in need of support. They also provided us with a copy of the Tongan Building Code. We have asked the Ministry of Infrastructure (now responsible for the rebuild) for PSST to be included in the NGO Shelter Cluster and this may also give us access to a large quantity of donated building materials locked in containers on the wharf in Nuku'alofa not yet released by the government.

The team met with the NZ High Commissioner to Tonga, Tiffany Babington who was "expecting" us and were already running our profile on their Facebook page from our Oamaru Mail article of 28 September 2018. We were made most welcome and encouraged as well as being given a number of very useful contacts.

At Vaiola hospital the 2 containers of donated medical supplies were formally handed over to Dr Saia Piukala (Hon. Minister of Health). Peter also spoke with the Emergency Dept. nurses and doctors.



Many photos were taken of the damaged buildings and we looked closely around those areas where the vulnerable people appear to be most concentrated, Ma'ofanga, Fangaloto, and Niutoua. Simon has produced a Powerpoint presentation of our scoping visit and proposed projects.



The team spoke to a number of potential families within the category we wish to work with. Working with these families will be an ongoing challenge as there are issues of land ownership and coordination of supplies and expert help, motivating of their church leaders, village officials and family etc. We will continue exploring these contacts and dependent on progress we hope to help 2 or 3 of these over the next 3 months. There is still a small quantity of our building material stored in Tonga (16 sheets of roofing iron, 10 sheets of plywood, 4 rolls of bracing strap, 2 rolls of building paper, and a small quantity of timber). Taua has another container going to Tonga in December that we may put in added building supplies if required.



If we take trade builders, electricians and plumbers from NZ as part of our team, the Tongan Institute of Science and Technology (TIST) would like to attach students to us. This is exciting.

Unity/Community

In order to help the most vulnerable Tongan families without access to land, we have been promoting a formal, local, people driven, community organisation (Community Council) which can own land and manage community owned dwellings if constituted under the Tongan Charities Act or a new Commercial Community Council Act.

The Ongo Niuas (most northern group of islands in Tonga, partly relocated to Tongatapu and Eua following a tsunami nine years ago) have already formed a Community Council (ONCC) under the Charities Act to serve their community. The ONCC have recently bought community land on Tongatapu for their people. The ONCC dream is to build a central community fale for meetings, teaching weaving, tapa cloth making, sewing, food preparation, and other activities such as weddings and funerals. This community fale will be surrounded by small dwellings for their vulnerable people and short-term visitors, a clinic/consultation building, and a neighbouring plot with a glass house for vegetable propagation and growing. The ONCC have a grant to establish the plant propagation and vegetable growing venture. They wish to reach out and help care for their vulnerable people but also grow and enable them to become self-sustaining. They are calling their centre the “Talanoa Enabling Centre” i.e. a “talking” and “growing” place. The ONCC have invited PSST to be a part of this visioning and building project and to use this as a base to reach out to other groups and villages replicating similar structures. It would be exciting for PSST to be a part of enabling this vision but it will depend on our ability to raise funds. The ONCC have the ability to project manage their own development with our enabling and they also wish to reach out to other groups and villages. Sitiveni Halapua, the ONCC leader, has been invited to come and visit Oamaru to talk to this vision when he visits NZ with his wife Janet in January 2019. The scoping team have walked the ONCC land on Tongatapu with Vatau (the MP for the Ongo Niuas). Simon Rodwell is currently sketching building design possibilities for them to take back to their people. This project would give us a good achievable focus commencing April/May next year without limiting in fact may aid our ability to help build for other individual vulnerable families so long as funding is available.

The team met with four community groups (out of 13) from one village (Kolonga) encouraging them to reach out to the other groups in their village and form an overarching Community Council under the Charities Act making it much easier to help those most in need in their village. There is a request for an old Massey Fergusson (180-280) tractor with a large 3 disc (60cm diameter approx.) plough and also a single ripping harrow for one of these community groups. On our final night in Tonga the scoping team met with these groups together in their Noble's house, again encouraging them to unite under one umbrella organisation. The evening ended with all linking hands, singing and then praying aloud simultaneously. It was a truly amazing spiritual experience with most crying (in joy) before God. I truly believe that it will be the women's groups who will lead this unification process.

The team also met up with a number of business leaders including CEO's and managers from 2 concrete block making companies, plastic tank moulders, Fletcher Ryco and the Palu group of companies (construction division).



Accommodation in Tonga

We have a draft agreement on the lease of a 4 bedroom home in Veitongo Beach (central south coast, Tongatapu) with large vegetable gardens, bananas, mango, pineapples and watermelons for our use from mid April 2019 forward for the length of our mission. This is 400 metres from two relatively safe beaches and lagoon.



A local administrator and business woman (a former Salvation Army Officer) is considering being our Tongan liaison person. She also coordinates all the Salvation Youth programmes for Tonga and as such will be a useful contact for any youth groups wishing to travel to Tonga as a part of our mission.

The Tongan Minister of Health, Dr Saia Piukala really did catch our vision and following is a quote from his last email communication with Peter. **"I am looking forward to working with you as partners and to fulfil and live our dreams"**. Saia will be a great support for PSST in the future.

The goal ahead of us now is to raise in the vicinity of \$500,000, seek volunteering or sponsorship of tradespeople to lead the building projects, and acquire or purchase sufficient building materials for the projects. Fundraising has commenced in earnest and we seek ongoing support.

May you all be blessed as we are being blessed.

Malo aupito (thank you all very much).

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