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HOW DO AUSTRALIA-BASED MIGRANTS HELP IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

*A case study of diaspora responses to the 2022
Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai
volcanic eruption and tsunami*



August 2023



The research team is very grateful to members of the Tongan community in Australia who participated in this study for their generous contribution of time and valuable insights.

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About the research

In 2022, researchers from the University of Melbourne undertook a project exploring how Australia-based migrants (diasporas) help in times of humanitarian crises overseas. The project involved community researchers from eight diaspora communities (Afghanistan, Indonesia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Pacific Islands, South Sudan and Syria) to co-design methodology, engage communities and collect data to find out *how*, *why* and *what* was done by communities in Australia in response to specific crises or events. The project aims to better understand the strengths and challenges faced by Australia-based migrants responding to different kinds of crises (disasters, conflicts and complex crises), and to identify potential tools that can support diaspora communities in their responses in the future. More information about this project can be found at <https://diasporahumanitarians.com/>.

About this report

This report is a summary of findings for the case study on **Pacific diasporas' responses to the 2022 Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami**. Loudeen M Fualautoalasi-Lam was the community researcher leading the research for this case study, in collaboration with Professor Bina Fernandez (Chief Investigator), Dr Louise Olliff (Research Associate), Lorenza Lazzati (Project Officer) and Dr René Rejón (Research Assistant). Data was gathered using the following mixed methods:

- **Interviews:** 13 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, age, gender, migration experience and years living in Australia). Interviews were held by Zoom or in person (in Melbourne) between June and October 2022. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were thematically coded using Nvivo.
- **Photovoice:** 6 participants were engaged by the community researcher using photovoice methodology to draw out key themes and reflections. Discussion about the photos that were chosen by participants was audio recorded, transcribed and thematically coded in Nvivo.
- **Survey:** 50 community members completed an online survey. Data was analysed using Qualtrics.
- **Participant observation:** A researcher diary was kept and observations were thematically coded in Nvivo.

The names of participants quoted in this report have been changed.



FINDINGS:

Crisis context:

How did the nature of the crisis shape diaspora responses?

Many of the participants in this research spoke about the Pacific Islands as a region where disasters are regular and recurring. Communities are used to preparing for and responding to natural hazards such as cyclones and flooding as a 'part of life'. The 2022 volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga was therefore seen within a **broader context of well-worn disaster responses**, but with a sense that climate change was increasing the frequency and severity of disasters and that diaspora communities needed to get better at responding.

... when it comes to natural disasters, the Pacific, we understand. We really understand the geographical location, in the middle of the Ring of Fire... We will talk about the cyclone seasons: "Oh, cyclone season's coming up." The preparation that goes into... it's like it's part of life. (Manamea)

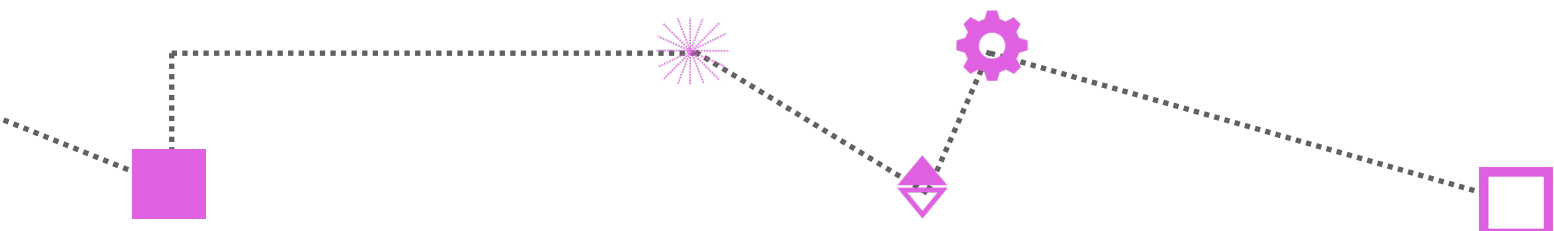
What made this event notable for many of the research participants was **the scale of the disaster** – with this being one of the largest volcanic eruptions in recent global history, as well as the relative novelty of a tsunami striking the Tongan capital Nuku'alofa, where many people in Australia have family and friends. The international attention that was drawn to this event also resulted in 'the rest of the world donating'.

All you hear on that night [was] the crying of people from overseas of hearing the tsunami, because always in Tonga [there is] a warning for the tsunami, but it never hit Tonga. And most of the Tongan, they never believe there will be a tsunami. And because this is new and when the tsunami hit Tonga, everyone was so very emotional... We can see that would be the end of Tonga because Tonga is flat and ... where can they hide? (Siale)

A resonate theme for participants reflecting on the nature of the crisis itself – about how they heard and felt about it, and how this shaped their response – related to their experience of being in touch with family and friends as events unfolded and in real time (as 'the sky was darkening') and then the devastating silence that followed for weeks after communication with the islands was cut off. The **inability to connect with people in Tonga in the immediate aftermath** created a sense of fear and foreboding, but also stalled diaspora mobilisation because people could not find out for some weeks what the impact of the volcanic eruption and tsunami had been and what was needed.

... all I could see on Facebook were messages from helpless Tongans just trying to figure out what's happening with their families, because there were a lot of families who were in the middle of video-calling their family back home, then it stopped because all they could see was waves coming up. And so, their families were running. And that was the end of the conversation. (Papahi)

We were able to contact until after the actual volcano erupted. So, after that, there was nothing. And I think that's when everyone started to panic. (Tahi)



Diaspora context:

How did characteristics of the diaspora in Australia shape responses?

When talking about how the characteristics of the Tongan diaspora in Australia shaped responses to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami, participants spoke about the challenges of being **a small and at times fragmented community**, particularly compared to the diaspora in New Zealand, the United States and elsewhere. For Tongans who were newer in Australia, it was hard to 'find the community' and some spoke about a lack of cohesiveness and coordination, with different groups doing different things.

The Tongan community in general is just very much—we're very separated in how we work. It's rare that we'd all just come together to celebrate one thing. So, I think some of that also hinders a lot of our reaction and responses to emergencies that happen. (Eponi)

You know that communities like ours, we don't have [well-established] social structures and networks in place for us in our community [in Australia]. So, it's very hard ... to kind of build a very strong, robust community when it also seems that we don't have that coming together... (Tama)

Research participants spoke about **intergenerational differences** and how this impacted connectedness to community structures and whether someone felt they 'belonged', but also how people understood the nature of the crisis and what was needed. For example, one woman spoke about how older generations have the authority, cultural knowledge and connections to the islands, but also had less access to information that younger generations had through social media and other digital platforms. These differences mattered when individuals, families and organisations were deciding what to do.

There are still parts of our population that may not be as in tune to social media like some of us... The generation before us, they do not see it as— So they lose out. They lose out information. And they're not necessarily getting the information they need. (Tama)

Many interviewees spoke about the **solidarity shown by other Pacific Island diasporas** in response to this crisis, and how other communities got involved through pan-Oceania networks and organisations such as the United Pacifica Council of Victoria (UPCOV) and Victorian Oceania Community Alliance. The coming together of groups as a Pacific or Oceania diaspora was spoken about in terms of empathy born of experience and a recognition of kinship that many non-Tongan Pacific Islanders felt towards their Tongan brothers and sisters.

I thought of the families that I know that live here that are Tongans, and also the families that are married to Cook Islanders which I know of. Now, when that happened, I quickly thought of, "Okay, seeing we are—as a Pacific Island, we are people of one nation. What can I do, what can [our network] do, what can the Cook Islands do to support the crisis?" (Sione)



Main activities: What did Pacific Island diasporas do?

Most research participants described diaspora responses being at a **household-to-household**, **household-to-community** or **community-to-household** level (i.e., families and community groups in Australia supporting families, villages or local organisations in Tonga); with the diaspora in Australia first-and-foremost responding to needs within family networks. This was described by one participant as a focus on internal support to families, with the concept of family extending to a wider set of social relations or ‘inherited connections’ that spans Australia and the islands, and to a lesser extent external support to people outside of the family. Pacific diaspora communities who had no internal obligations in Tonga spoke more in terms of **community-to-community** responses.

One of the main activities that was spoken about was **collecting and sending material goods to Tonga**. The types of goods mentioned included: food, water, furnishings, kitchenware, school equipment, clothes, tents and building materials. Some of the goods sent were organised collectively, with families paying for space in a container to send their families specific items. Other instances of containers being filled and sent was less targeted, with families collecting donations from the wider community and shipping this without necessarily a clear plan of how goods would be distributed at the other end. Some participants spoke about sending money to family in New Zealand to purchase goods to be shipped from somewhere closer to Tonga. As Luisa said: ‘people are more willing to give things than they are to give money’.

Fundraising was a major activity for many in the diaspora, with a range of activities taking place to raise funds. This included fundraising through church service collection tins, holding community fundraising dinners in different cities, community radio fundraisers, and cooking and selling Friday night ‘supper’ dinners.

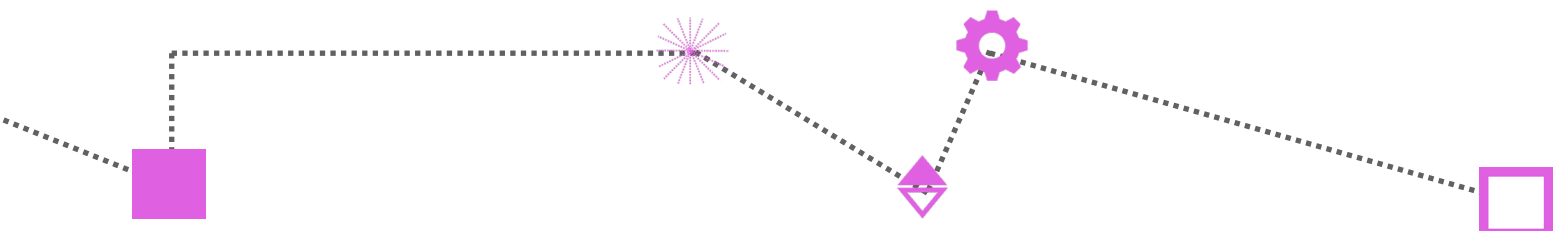
Groups involved in fundraising included individuals, church groups, women’s and men’s groups, Tongan diaspora organisations, as well as groups collecting donations from wider Pacific diasporas and non-diaspora social networks.

That night, they raised \$20,000, which was a huge amount. In Sydney, they raised, I think it was close to \$85,000. Yes, but Melbourne was pretty good considering it was organised by an independent and not the Tongan community association. So, it was pretty good. (Lautoka)

Fundraising efforts contributed to the costs of transporting material goods as well as to **direct financial transfers to crisis-affected people**. Financial transfers were both at a household level (i.e., remittances to family and friends) and collective remittances (e.g., church-to-church, community-to-schools).

[W]hen I eventually talked to dad, he was like: “No, don’t send anything, just send money. That’s really what we need right now.” [He said]: “We really need money for these schools that are totally gone. There’re kids who don’t have houses,” and all that sort of stuff. So, we just sent money straight to him. (Kiupita)

For me and my parents, [we] knew that we weren’t going to contribute to those events and to those fundraising because we already knew that we had family in Tonga that can receive the money directly. The way that happens is that... as long as one person from the family receives money, [others] in the village will [be helped]. So, it doesn’t matter if it’s just my family, I just send money to my Auntie, and whatever resources they can then make available with those funds, they can share it amongst the village. (Hiva)



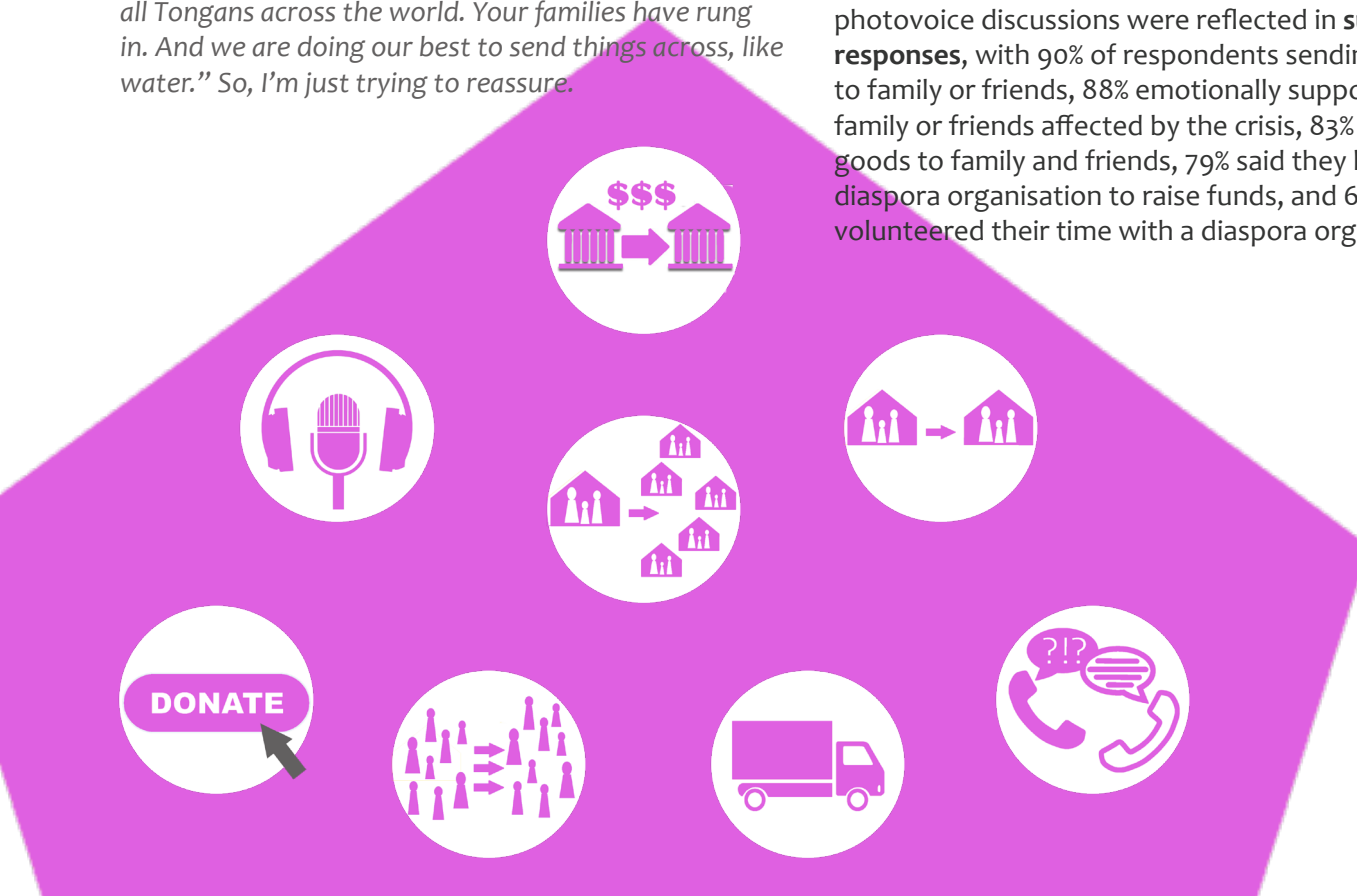
Another activity that was talked about in the immediate aftermath of the eruption and tsunami was **emotional and psychosocial support**, through gestures such as phone calls and messages of solidarity, love and support. Psychosocial support also came in the form of prayer services, vigils and radio call-in programs where people could share information, as well as express fears and hopes. Papahi, who called in to a radio broadcast in Tonga after communication lines were re-established, described this kind of support as such:

And I said: "For everyone out there who's listening to this news, your relatives have rung in from different parts of the world, and they just send their love and they're all praying for you. We are all thinking of you, all Tongans across the world. Your families have rung in. And we are doing our best to send things across, like water." So, I'm just trying to reassure.

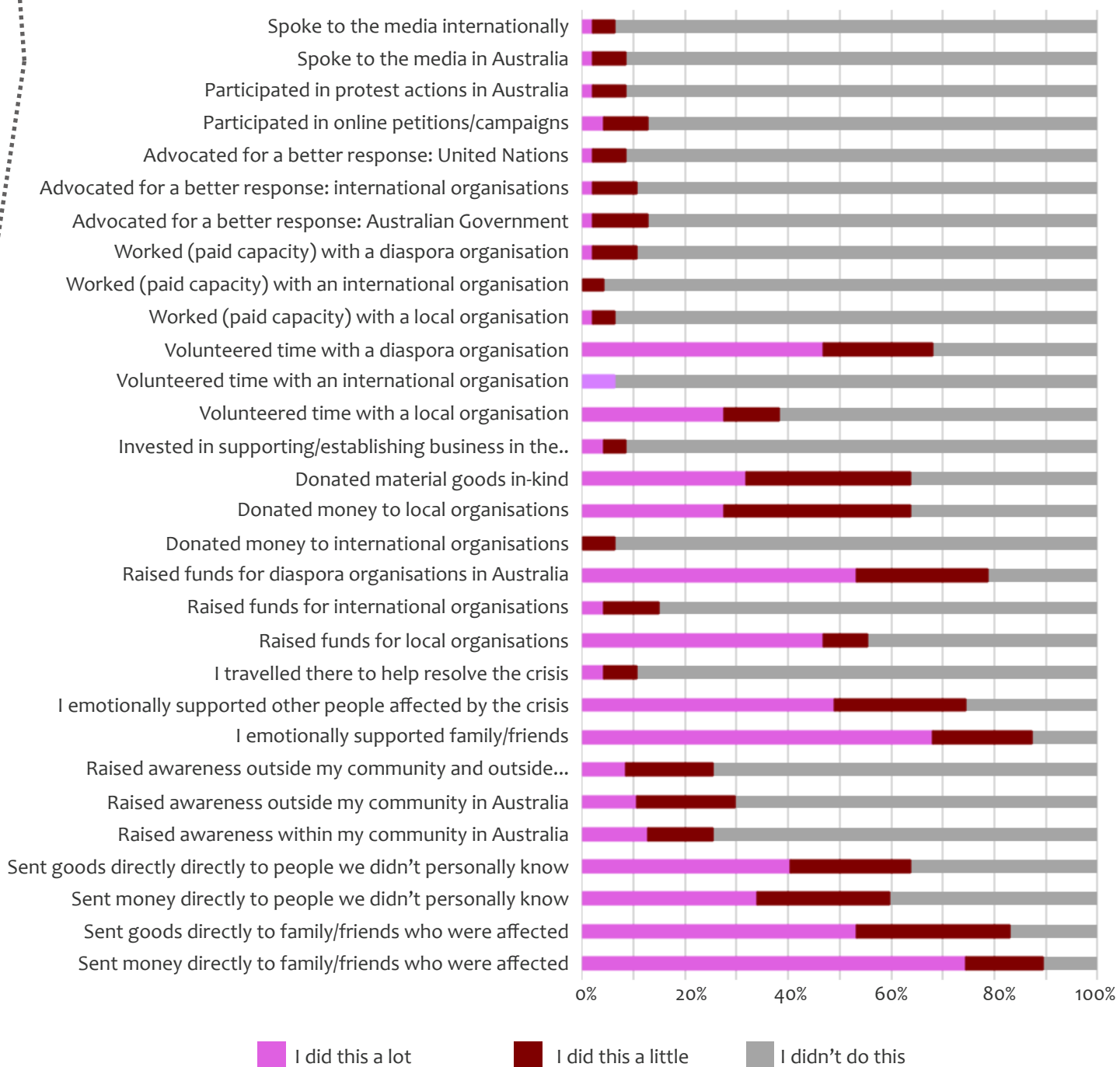
I made contact with families that I do know because I'm quite close to them and asked them, just made contact to see. I didn't ask them questions like how are you feeling? Because those are really dumb questions... I put it out to them: "If you need me, let me know. I don't know how I can help. But just know that I'm here and you're in my prayers." (Manaia)

Other actions mentioned by participants included raising awareness about the disaster and community needs with the broader public in Australia through media outlets, and professionals in the diaspora working directly with leaders in Tonga in **re-instating a community radio station** once communication lines to and from Tonga were re-established.

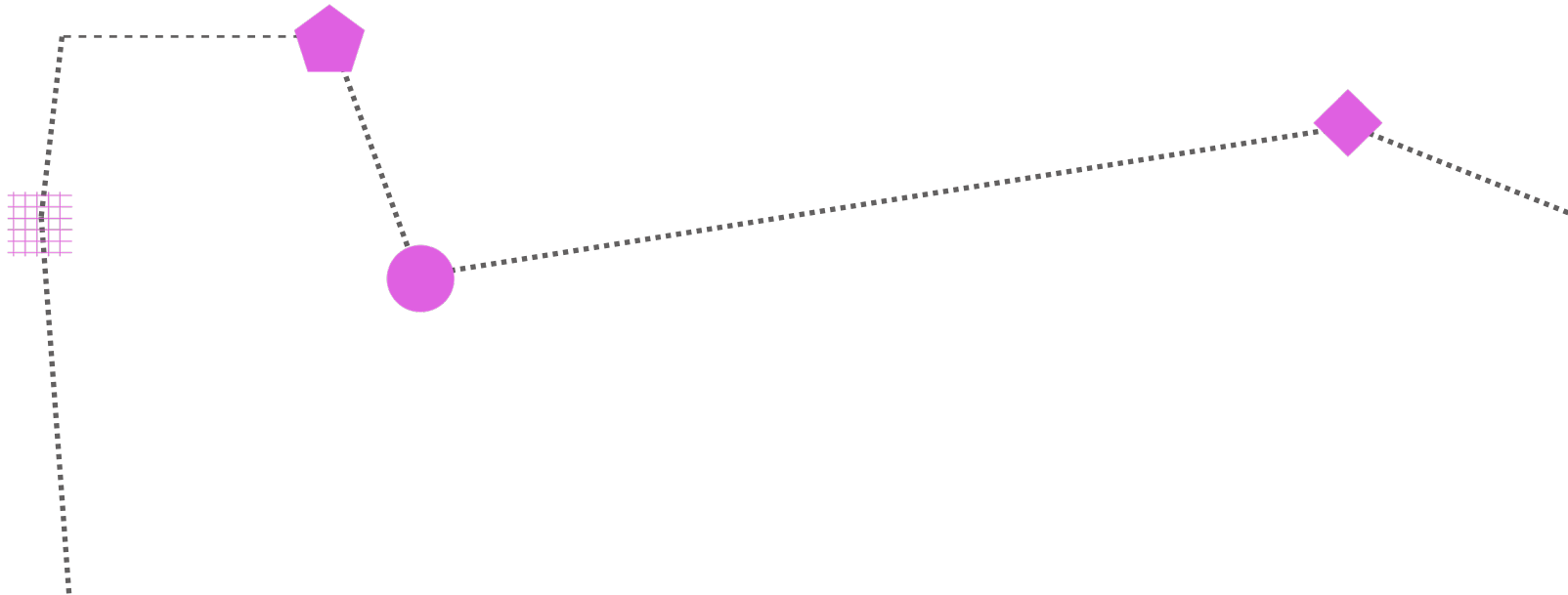
Activities described in interviews and through photovoice discussions were reflected in **survey responses**, with 90% of respondents sending money to family or friends, 88% emotionally supported family or friends affected by the crisis, 83% sending goods to family and friends, 79% said they helped a diaspora organisation to raise funds, and 68% said they volunteered their time with a diaspora organisation.



Q. What did you do to respond to this crisis?







Needs addressed:

What needs within crisis-affected communities were addressed?



Food and water – in the immediate aftermath, diaspora networks sent water and long-life food items to address the issue of water contamination and loss of crops and other foods.



Household goods – diaspora members sent furnishings, kitchenware, clothing, tents, radios, torches, and shoes to families whose houses had been inundated.



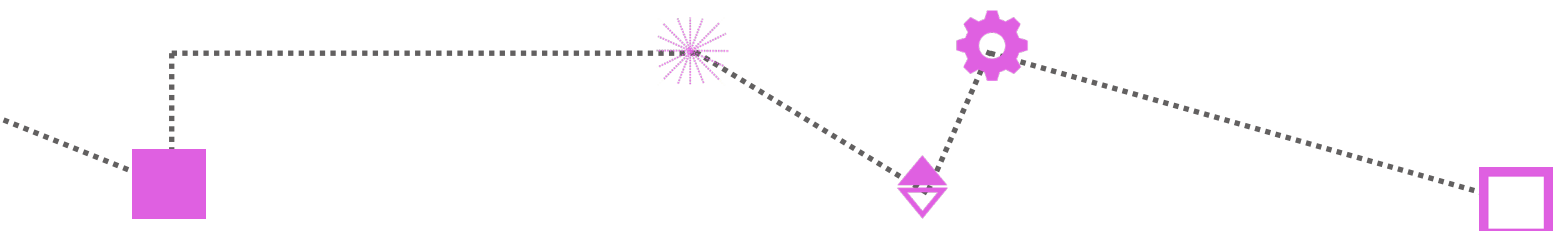
Infrastructure repairs – money was sent to repair houses and other community infrastructure destroyed by the tsunami and volcanic ash.



Communications – Money was raised to support a local radio station to be able to re-start broadcasting. Radios were also sent from the diaspora to communities.



Education – money and goods were sent to rebuild and re-supply affected schools.



How needs were identified was discussed by several participants, with some variation in how decisions were made, what to prioritise and how to act to address identified needs. In general, those in Australia responded to needs identified directly by their families or were channelled through community networks (churches, villages, local organisations) working on the ground. A key area of debate or contention was whether to address needs by sending goods or money, as the following quotes suggest:

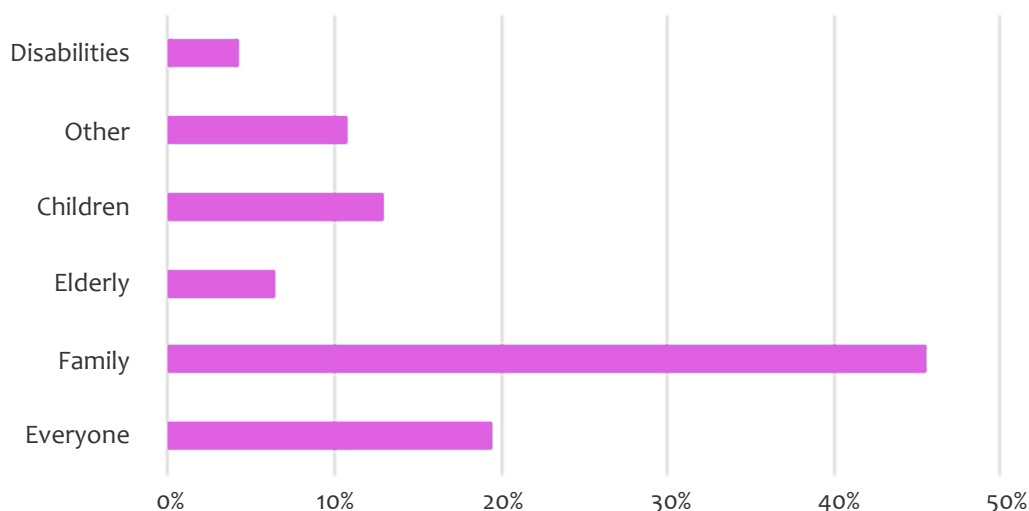
My mom spoke to her brother, and he basically said... "We always get too much of things that we don't need. [...] We always end up with all of this extra stuff which then goes to landfill. It's not good for the environment."

[...] So, what he was basically saying is: "We appreciate the help from overseas, but we just want you to trust that we know what we need on the ground. And if we need those particular items, we will call for it." (Eponi)

I think at the end of the day, the people inside will have a better sense of what the situation is, and what that need is. And they'll articulate it to us. And then we will look at it: "Okay, so how are we going to support that particular need?" (Tama)

In terms of who the diaspora focused their efforts on, the survey reflected the strong emphasis on family.

Q. Were there any groups within the crisis-affected population that you specifically tried to help?





Modalities:

What tools helped to facilitate diaspora responses?

Social networks were central to diaspora responses, with participants describing how family networks were activated in Australia and across the wider diaspora. Within families, elders were key to decision-making.

Church networks were also described as active facilitators in many ways, not only with fundraising and providing social support to diaspora in Australia, but also by transferring funds and distributing goods through church networks in Tonga. When talking about social networks as how things got done, **trust** was a strongly recurring theme. Simply put, people relied on trusted relationships to facilitate actions.

If you want to give, you give to people you trust and, at the end of the day, you give to your family. (Luisa)

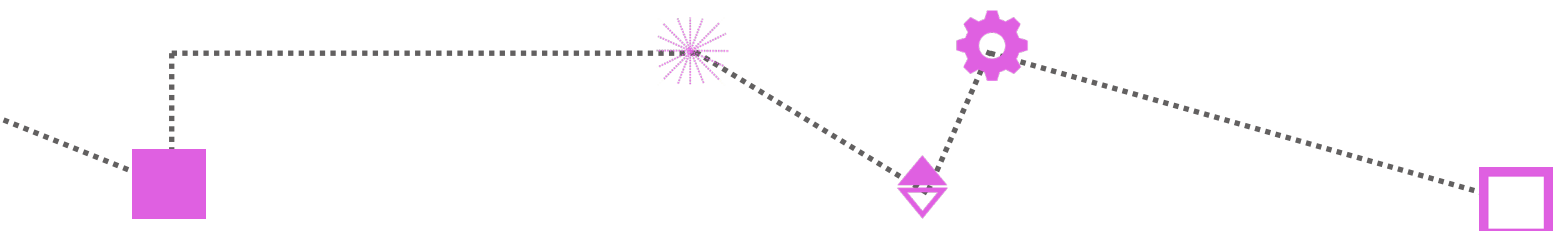
A key way in which diaspora communities in Australia responded to this crisis was **through shipping containers of material items**. While there were mixed views on the merit of sending items as opposed to money (see above), there were different groups involved in funding, coordinating and filling containers. For example, one informal group put a general call out for goods through community networks, filled a container at a warehouse, and shipped this to Tonga with an understanding that goods donated would be distributed to affected communities in an unspecified way. Other initiatives were more targeted and involved families purchasing space within a container and filling this with goods specifically for distribution to their families.

The High Commission of the Kingdom of Tonga in Canberra was mentioned by many participants for its work in forming a committee of community leaders and **facilitating coordination** of Australian-based

diaspora responses. This was enabled greatly by the High Commissioner of Tonga to Australia herself, Princess Lātūfuipeka, as a respected member of the royal family who convened an advisory group of two community members per state or territory. It was noted that Princess Lātūfuipeka's involvement brought authority to these coordinated efforts as well as enabled the transfer of funds raised to be distributed through local charities in Tonga.

So, she handpicked two community leaders from these states and called a committee. She called it Pili o Tauhala. [...] I think the translation that she had for that was, it's like a rope that everyone is holding on to. (Papahi)

Several **online tools** were described by interviewees as facilitating or shaping how diaspora networks in Australia responded to the volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga. Accessible online tools were used to communicate with loved ones, share information, identify needs, coordinate and fundraise. This included **social media platforms** like Facebook groups and videoconferencing tools like Zoom. **Money transfer services** such as Western Union and MoneyGram were mentioned as tools that enabled diaspora financial transfers. To a lesser extent **crowdfunding sites** such as GoFundMe were mentioned as useful platforms for fundraising, most notably by high profile Tongans like Olympian Pita Taufatofua, who used his public profile to raise over \$400,000 in four days. Finally, (online) **community radio** seemed to play an important role for many as a source of information, support and as a platform that was used to raise awareness about diaspora coordination, events and fundraising efforts.



Well, if we didn't have social media, I wouldn't be able to know what was happening in Tonga until much later. But on that day, obviously, like I said, I stayed just continuously watching nonstop for that whole week of prayer vigil that was on. But that, to me social media around times like that played a very useful tool. (Papahi)

We as media people were first contact because people don't know where to contact or who to contact. And they would ring us and say, "Do you know what's going on?", or if someone has passed on information that is a fundraiser. And we were directly involved with a lot of the fundraisers that were open. People would have dances or whatever they could think of doing, or organize containers, and we would get that through to the people. (Tahi)





Motivations:

Why did the Tongans and other Pacific diasporas in Australia respond as they did?

The most frequent theme relating to why Australia-based diaspora networks responded as they did spoke of a sense of **obligation to family and community**, with ‘family’ extending beyond blood relations to the inherited connection one had with Tongans or to a wider Pacific family.

When we’re talking about collective society, where we come from, when we say ‘family’ it’s all inclusive. Yes, I would, for the sake of expediency, I would reach out to my immediate family, but at the same time, I would just as easily reach out to members of my extended family... (Tama)

Now, the crisis, the Tongan crisis... we were affected by a bloodline, by who we know, who we see every day, by friendship, by a family, by a community and by Pacific family.... That’s what makes them come out because they see Tongan as their own family, as their own people. (Sione)

We were almost like a big community, like brothers and sisters, with the different Pacific islands. So, the motivation for me in this is Tonga, the people itself, they’re like family. (Laaka, Tokelauan)

Closely related to this, **collectivist culture and identity** was described by people as key to what motivated and mobilised responses. In this, the much longer history of migration from the islands was evoked. Contributing during times of disaster or crisis, therefore, is an extension of a culture and identity where obligation to family and community is transnational and collectivist in nature, i.e., the ways in which people communicate, decide and share what they have connects Tongans in Tonga and the diaspora in everyday life.

I think about our collective communities versus individualistic communities. And that’s a massive

difference. So that when we’ve got collective communities who already involved with each other, so when something happens, they’ve already got the framework or networks with each other. So that’s why they all want to help. And because you’re involved with your family and your family’s family and your friends, it’s part of your everyday life... (Langi)

Understanding the Pacific way of being, belonging, knowing and learning, it’s all about the “we” not “me”. Right? (Manamea)

Faith was also clearly a moral driver for many, with references made by participants to church teachings and Christian doctrine. As Sione put it: ‘I always believe in two main pillars within Pacific islands. One is to love God and to believe in God. Two is to embrace our identity, our culture and also our heritage.’

More affective forces (based on feeling or emotion) were also at play; with elders from other Pacific diasporas moved to support their Tongan brothers and sisters by making **empathetic comparisons** to their own island contexts. Others spoke of the guilt of their relative privilege, or the **guilt** and pressure of needing to ‘be seen’ as helping.

I think if you’re here, you would feel guilty if you weren’t helping. I think for a lot of families, their families actually rely heavily on them in the West to support them in Tonga. There’s a lot of pressure there. (Hiva)

Finally, interviewees who were most active in responding to people in need in Tonga talked about their helping being motivated by a sense of **personal fulfillment or satisfaction**; that there was joy or ‘elated spirits’ of coming together to help.





Collaboration:

How did the Tongan diaspora connect with other actors?

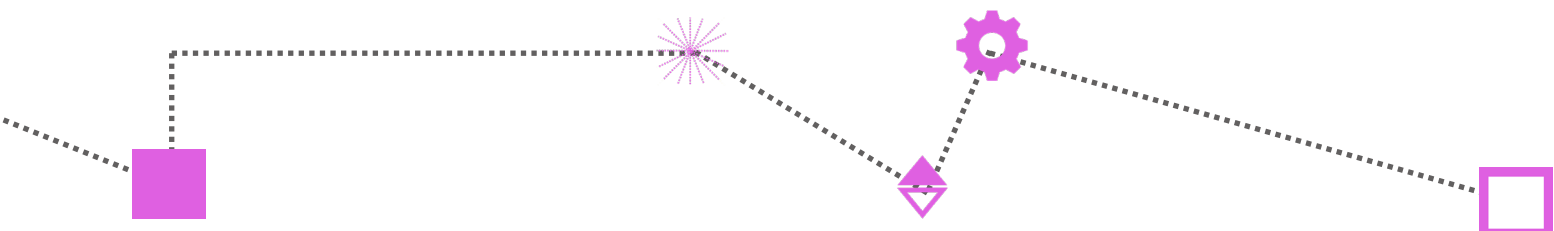
In terms of relationships between the diaspora in Australia and other actors responding to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami, there was little evidence of collaboration beyond the coordination and facilitating role played by the Tongan High Commissioner in Canberra. This was mainly because most support was sent directly to or through family networks.

With regards to other humanitarian actors, several participants spoke about not needing or wanting to collaborate with larger or more visible NGOs because it was more effective or efficient to send money or goods directly to people they knew, or because these NGOs had 'different priorities.' When asked whether she or others had worked with any of the bigger NGOs involved in this response, Hiva said: 'I don't even know how we would.' She went on to talk about humanitarian organisations' fundraising in response to this disaster: 'As we know, the Red Cross will take the money, but it doesn't necessarily ensure that that money will go towards the volcano and the impacts that it caused there.' This sentiment was echoed by another participant, who said:

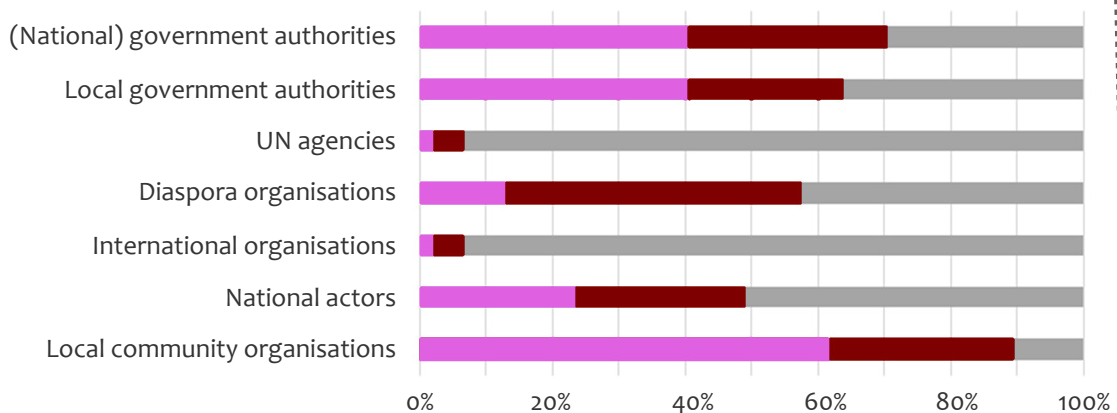
When you donate to [a big NGO], it doesn't necessarily go to where you think it's going. Because they've got other priorities and that's where that money will go. So, if you think— They advertise "Donate here for that", you think you're donating for that, but later, that fund is not going to where you think it's going. [...] So, I'm not convinced. I'm not convinced that those organisations are doing what they say they're gonna be doing for our communities [...]. So here's why, why our communities, we are better off doing for ourselves, because that's what we've learned to do. (Mania)

Several people did collaborate with or contribute to local organisations or community structures in Tonga, including churches and a community radio station. Faith-based (church) networks were spoken about with some frequency as facilitators of fundraising, psychosocial support, as well as the distribution of material aid, with various denominations mentioned (e.g., Mormons, Wesleyan church). Village-level community structures were also drawn on, with named boxes sent to town officers for local distribution.

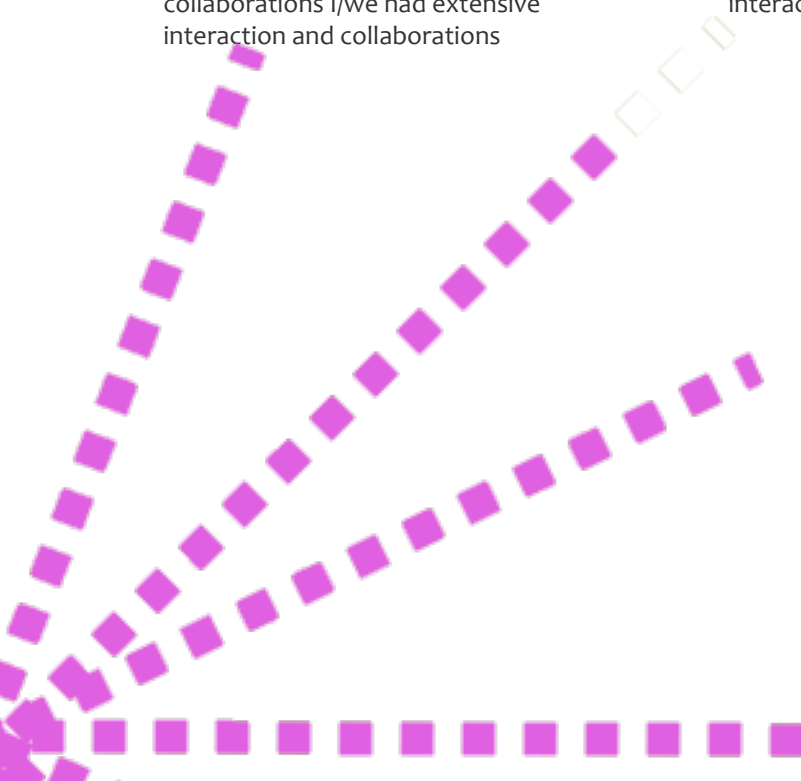
The level of interaction with other actors is also reflected in survey responses, with the greatest level of interaction being with local organisations or government authorities in Tonga. Fewer than 8% of survey respondents had any interaction with international organisations or agencies.

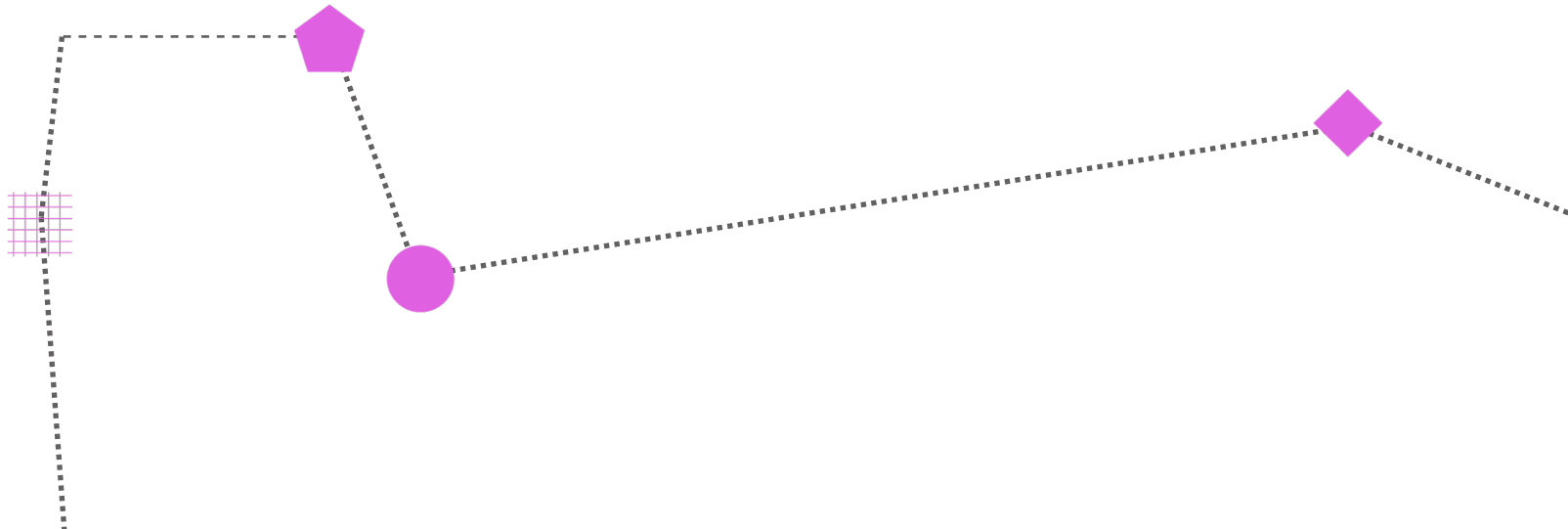


Q. How would you assess the level of interaction you or your community had with other actors responding to the crisis?



■ I/we had extensive interaction and collaborations I/we had extensive interaction and collaborations
■ I/we had some or limited interactions
■ I/we had no interaction

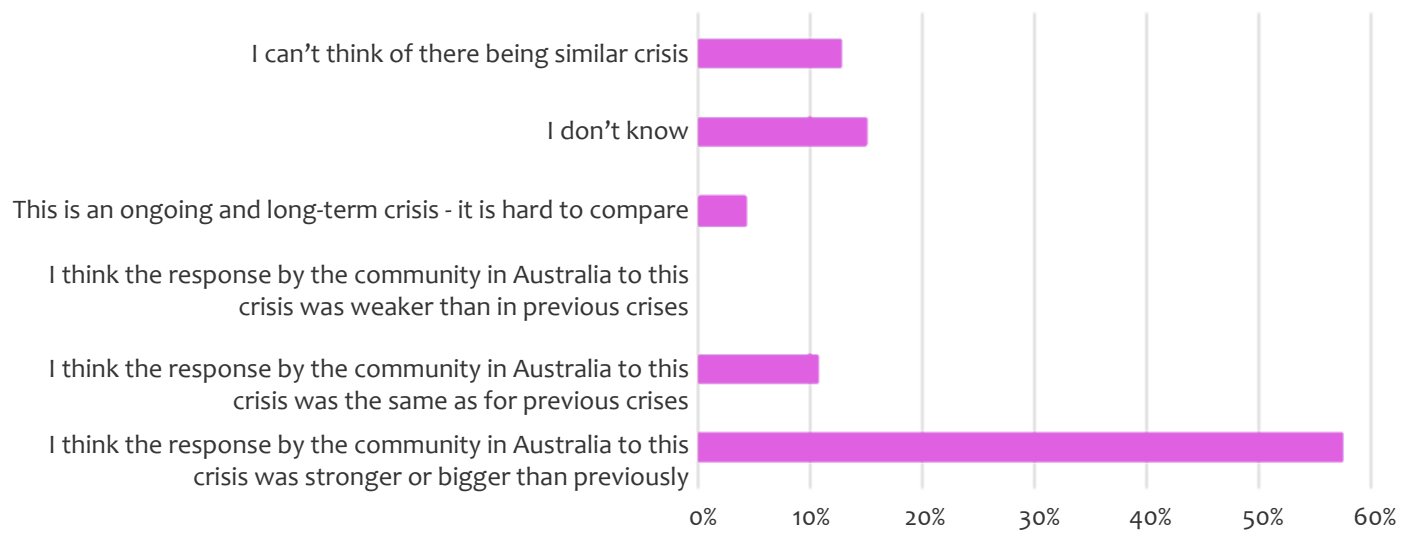




Impact and effectiveness: What made a difference?

Overall, survey respondents felt that **the response by the diaspora was stronger or bigger** compared to past experiences.

Q. Do you think the community in Australia's response to this crisis was stronger, weaker or the same as the responses to previous crises?



There were some **mixed or conflicting views** among research participants about what was impactful or effective in diaspora responses to this disaster.



Asking people in crisis-affected community what they need, rather than assuming.

When the tsunami hit Tonga, the only cry that we hear from people [is]: 'We need some water'. All we hear is water. [...] So we fill the boxes with water... We rush into our Aldi, Coles, wherever we can lay hands on water. And most of the things that we send was water to Tonga. While the container was on the way they said on the news, the water is alright, but it's too late. The water is on the way! (Siale)



Containers of goods not providing what people need (e.g., too much water sent).



Sending goods directly to people who you know, so they get the things that they are asking for.

General feeling is, it's very effective because we responded directly to those who are on the ground. (Manamea)



Too much reliance on family networks (i.e., people you know), so those who don't have connections overseas miss out.

I know that people help families directly, but there's also people who don't have families. And that is my worry. When we're fundraising and we're sending overseas, there's also families who don't have families overseas. (Tahi)



Sending money rather than material items to family, friends or community groups so they can buy what they need.

Cash is key, right? If we transfer it, we know they're going to get it. We know that they'll use it for what they need it for. And that if there's any families going without, they'll be able to support as a village. (Hiva)



Coordination through the Tongan High Commission, so that families could send goods and money in a more coordinated and cost-effective way.

We can do things from a community point of view, from a church point of view, but it's just nicer when it comes from— There's a clear direction from Canberra. Yes. And it just comes down straight from Tonga from the government there. And it comes to us. It's a lot easier. And it just— We just know that what we're doing is legal and [...] we're working together as a community. (Papahi)



Lack of oversight to know impact and if goods or money sent were distributed as intended.

It's always the case. We start seeing some people say, "Oh, we got stuff," and then we see people who say, "No, we didn't get anything." So, it's a worry. (Hiva)



Challenges:

What was difficult or didn't work?

Some of the challenges diaspora participants spoke about when responding to this crisis included a **lack of resources at an individual and community level**.

This was discussed particularly in the context of many Tongans in Australia being seasonal workers who had limited funds to send overseas because of the precarity of their work. Fundraising within communities was also discussed as draining, and potentially put pressure on community members to make donations that put them under financial stress. One man spoke about how it was 'cultural pride' that made him feel he had to attend multiple community fundraising events, and that fundraising efforts needed to move beyond diaspora community networks.

The **focus, capacity and reach of diaspora associations or organisations** were identified by some participants as a challenge, because there was fragmentation in responses (i.e., different groups doing different things on a small scale) and initiatives were not necessarily coordinated (e.g., multiple events being held on the same night). As many of the Tongan and Pacific organisations in Australia have mandates that are focussed on local communities, there was less capacity or experience to pivot to providing or coordinating disaster relief.

... doing something for disaster management or whatever, that's extra on top of the other things that that organisation has to do, like plan events, plan programs for the community, all that stuff. And then, all of a sudden, there's a cyclone back home. Because if you notice [the] constitution, helping outside of Victoria is not part of the organisation's thing. However, the community members don't think that. They think they're members of your group, therefore it extends also to their family members back home. And that's the problem. They think it's our responsibility to help. (Luisa)

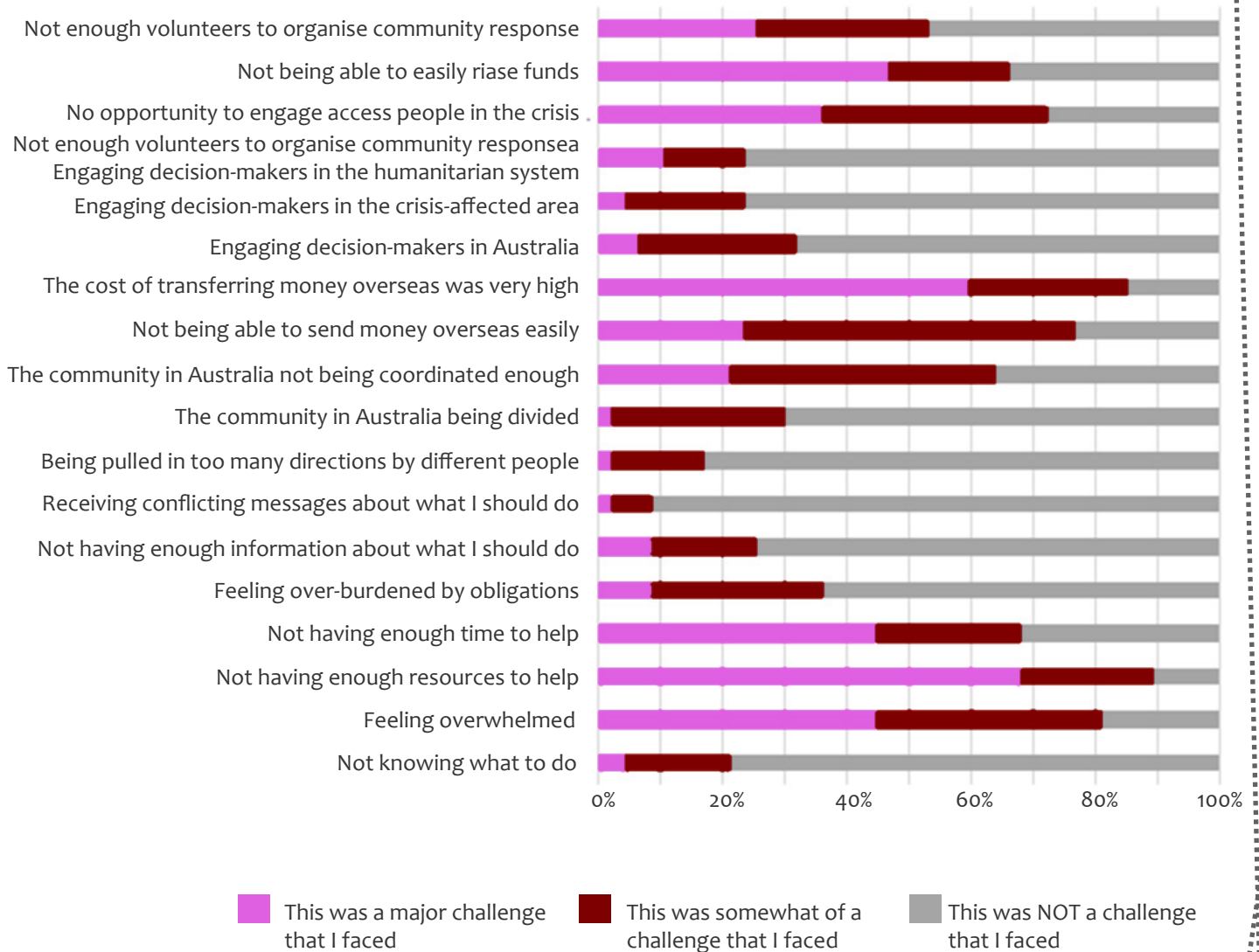
I feel like we really lack that peak body in the space to help consolidate community— Yes, I recognise there's different denominations, different religions, there are different cultural protocols. This peak body, they're supposed to be of neutral positioning to be able to unite the community. And I feel like we really lack that. So, I'd say that's one of the biggest challenges for me. (Eponi)

Weak **governance and accountability** of diaspora activities was discussed as a challenge, particularly as it resulted in mistrust among community members about getting involved in collective efforts. This was tied to a lack of capacity to follow through to know how funds sent to local organisations or communities were utilised and how goods were distributed, and to report back on what was done and the impact. But it also was discussed as a problem that was tied to the **short-term focus of some diaspora responses**, whereby families 'rushed to send things' without investing in more long-term sustainable responses that would involve systematic planning and coordination.

A lot of people look at short term, let's just fix that. It's a band aid fix. That's not going to last. Whereas now what they need to see and what they need to start working on is long term. And not only that, look at things where everyone in the community, whether you're in America, in Europe, New Zealand or Australia, will be able to contribute. If there is one thing that I would like to see is that everyone try to work together. (Ailine)

In surveys, the greatest challenges that respondents felt they faced were: not having enough resources to help (89% said this was a major or somewhat of a challenge), the cost of transferring money overseas being very high (85%), feeling overwhelmed (81%), not being able to send money overseas easily (77%) and not being able to speak to or access people affected by the crisis (72%).

Q. Was this a challenge you faced in making a positive difference to the lives of people affected by the crisis?





Recommendations:

What could help diasporas respond to humanitarian crises in future?

Three overarching themes emerged from participants when asked what would help Pacific diasporas in Australia respond to future humanitarian crises. This included:

1. Strengthen coordination capacity of Pacific diaspora networks in crisis response

Stronger community structures need to be established to facilitate connections and collaboration within diaspora networks in Australia to respond more quickly and effectively to future humanitarian crises. An investment in diaspora coordination would allow crisis response knowledge within communities to be deepened and enhance the impact of diaspora responses (see recommendation 2). Coordination structures could include: establishing ongoing community advisory groups (such as the one that was set up by the Tongan High Commissioner in this context), creating a network of Pacific community disaster relief focal points, or strengthening the disaster coordination focus of existing Pacific associations or networks so they have more capacity to lead this work.

2. Diaspora knowledge exchange on how to respond effectively in times of crisis

Areas identified by participants where knowledge within communities could be further developed included: needs analysis, working with disaster response centres, fundraising tools and strategies, project management, and accountability. In terms of

how to build expertise in these areas, it was suggested that a diaspora peer network or forum could facilitate knowledge exchange where diaspora leaders or organisations can learn from each other about what has and hasn't worked in different contexts, or guests with specific expertise relevant to disaster response could be invited to share information and ideas that is tailored to diaspora organisations or networks.

3. Stronger collaboration between diaspora communities and the humanitarian sector

There should be stronger engagement by institutional humanitarian actors (e.g., INGOs, governments) and diaspora communities. Humanitarian sector (government and INGOs) can help diasporas with procurement and delivery of goods, which is expensive and red tape makes it hard, and can benefit from targeted recruitment of staff who have both professional and cultural knowledge (i.e., employ Pacific diaspora).





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