



Volunteers for ADRA Samoa

Photo courtesy of Su'a Julia Wallwork.

ADRA Samoa

SU'A JULIA WALLWORK

Su'a Julia Wallwork is the country director for ADRA Samoa. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, since 2015. Wallwork grew up in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, but in her adult life, strayed for 35 years. Her parents never stopped praying for her, and she believes God answered their prayers, and that is why she is blessed to be where she is today – in the Master's Service.

The Adventist Development and relief Agency (ADRA) Samoa, located in Apia, the capital of Samoa,¹ has its office on the compound of the Seventh Day Adventist Church headquarters for Samoa and Tokelau. Samoa became an Independent nation in 1962, after being governed by Germany, Great Britain, and New Zealand. It is an archipelago consisting of the islands of Savaii, Upolu, Apolima, and Manono. The country director is Su'a Julia

Wallwork, who has managed the agency since 2009. Because it is mainly project-funded, its staff will vary according to current projects. During the period 2016-2019 it had 31 staff members while at the beginning of 2020 it had 14 ADRA staff.

Although the Adventist Church had engaged with local communities through various outreach programs, ADRA only began activities in Samoa after the cyclones *Ofa* in 1990 and *Val* in 1991. After ADRA provided clothing, rope, tarpaulins, and AUD\$10,000 worth of food and emergency supplies, it began to become known by the public. More than 20 villages on the islands of Upolu and Savaii sought the aid of its water conservation and supply program. ADRA built reservoirs and concrete water tanks to hold water. Also the villages of Asau and Fogatuli on Savaii and Saleaamua on Upolu received fiberglass tanks, each storing a million gallons of water. When the village of Saleimoa on the island of Upolu requested concrete seawalls to reduce the risk of rough seas destroying property and homes, ADRA assisted by building them.

ADRA Samoa was in its infancy between 1991 and 2009. Then a tsunami struck the southeastern coast of Upolu during the early hours of September 29, 2009. It caused the largest loss of life of any disaster in recent history. With the assistance of ADRA New Zealand, ADRA Australia, and ADRA South Pacific, ADRA Samoa was able to provide relief and recovery support to devastated communities and households, working together with the Samoa Mission to distribute tarpaulins, food, water, and clothing to affected families.²

Under new leadership in 2010, ADRA Samoa requested separate office space from the Samoa Mission, and a new building was erected on the mission compound.³ Virginia Pycroft, an accountant from New Zealand, was called to assist Su'a Julia Wallwork, newly appointed country director, with finances. Through ADRA New Zealand, funding became available through the Sustainable Development Fund, whereby ADRA Samoa worked in rural communities, assisting more than 600 families with programs for food security. The agency focused on healthy nutrition to reduce non-communicable diseases.⁴ It also provided financial literacy training to increase a public understanding of the vital role of savings and budgeting, so that families would recognize the need to sell any surplus from their harvests so as to strengthen their economic situation. Additionally, the agency received funding allocated for training community members to market and sell their produce. The project funded market stalls in the rural communities so that local families could market their produce. Those market stalls continue to serve the community and the public.

In 2012 Cyclone Evan hit the southern coast of Upolu on the island of Savaii. ADRA set up two evacuation centers that accommodated more than 1,000 people who sought refuge. At that time ADRA received an invitation to have a seat on the Disaster Advisory Committee (DAC).

Immediately after Cyclone Evan, OXFAM New Zealand came to Samoa and partnered with ADRA Samoa and the Samoa Red Cross to deliver purified drinking water to rural communities and hospitals where flooding had disrupted the local water supply. OXFAM NZ was a valued partner that supported ADRA Samoa long after the cyclone, offering its expertise and donating much needed equipment and office supplies.

Through the assistance of ADRA Germany, ADRA Samoa was able to access funding from the European Union (ECHO) to build shelters for more than 200 families. Habitat for Humanity NZ and the Swiss Consulate provided additional funding for another 64 shelters. The Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC) supplied carpentry students and instructors to assist with the construction. APTC selected the students from the devastated areas, so that they could help rebuild their own families and communities. The Australian government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) funded flooring and drop-down blinds for those shelters. Then the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) asked ADRA Samoa to construct another 45 homes according to the National Building Code. At about that same time, the Food Agricultural Organization requested that ADRA Samoa distribute seedlings and tools to more than 2,000 families, thus enabling them to develop resilience and food security as a part of local disaster preparedness. ADRA Samoa was growing on the strength of the various partnerships, and gained recognition from the various government ministries it was associated with.⁵ To further increase community economic strength and resilience, ADRA Samoa worked with local banks to provide financial literacy training as a part of all its projects.

To address the dominant social issues affecting not only individuals but also families and communities, ADRA Samoa obtained funding from the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme to present the "Open the Door Project," using media, television, radio, and newspapers to encourage communication within families and communities as a means of bringing about positive social changes.⁶ The National Disaster Management Office asked ADRA during 2013-2014 to help design and deliver a Toolkit for Community Disaster Climate Risk Management.

Since 2016, ADRA Samoa has successfully applied for funding from the European Union and the Australian Government, through the Community Support Services Program, to develop disaster awareness and preparedness programs in both urban and rural communities.

Between 2015-2018, Habitat for Humanity NZ, asked ADRA Samoa, in partnership with the Samoa Housing Corporation, to implement a Build Scheme funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZMFAT) to help low-income households refurbish and build better dwellings. During that same period, ADRA Samoa successfully applied to the Pacific American Climate Fund (PACAM) and USAID Call for a project focusing on livelihoods and community disaster climate risk management. Earlier, the Coastal Climate Adaptation Project (CCAP/USAID) engaged ADRA Samoa to install 89 water tanks on the island of Savaii for households with little or no access to water.

In 2017 ADRA Samoa co-hosted the World Symposium on Climate Change with the University of Hamburg, Germany, that brought many international participants to Apia for the event. A PACAM/USAID workshop coincided with the symposium so that most of the Pacific Islands would be able to participate.⁷

In the aftermath of Cyclone Gita in 2018, ADRA Samoa was able, with assistance from ADRA NZ, and PCAM/USAID, to distribute agricultural seedlings and tools to affected families in Upolu and Savaii. Habitat for Humanity NZ provided funding to enable ADRA Samoa to assist 45 households to rebuild their damaged homes.

Activities with Habitat for Humanity NZ were further strengthened with the support of Global Village Volunteers, who came for two or three weeks at a time to help with construction, not just for the Cyclone Gita recovery, but for additional projects.⁸

The behavioral science faculty of Loma Linda University came to Samoa and conducted training programs to prepare ADRA Samoa staff and other service providers to respond and address mental trauma during times of disaster. The program extended to preparing local trainers in rural communities.⁹

In 2018 CSSP, with funding from the World Bank, contracted with ADRA Samoa to implement pilot programs for climate resilience in 38 communities in rural and urban areas. From October 2018 to January 2020 ADRA has also worked with 22 communities. In both projects, ADRA was guided by, and works together with the National Disaster Management Office.

Habitat for Humanity NZ is a long-standing and respected partner of ADRA Samoa. It again has entrusted ADRA Samoa with the implementation of the Habitat Disaster Risk Reduction Project in Samoa, providing funding totalling NZ\$4 million during a period of four years. The project includes the Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA) and Build Back Safer (BBS) components and involves 45 communities: 30 in Upolu, and 15 in Savaii. It is planned to conclude in 2024. The goal for each of the communities is to build a sound and safe evacuation center for the village.

ADRA Samoa was honored in March 2018 to host the prime minister of New Zealand, Rt. Hon. Jacinda Ardern, and deputy prime Minister Rt. Hon Winston Peters, who chose to visit the Habitat/ADRA Build project during their official tour of the Pacific.

At the end of 2019, Samoa experienced a severe measles epidemic that claimed 83 lives, most of them infants and toddlers. Hospitals became overcrowded, and medical teams from all around the world converged on Samoa to assist with the treatment and care of the thousands being admitted. The severity of the situation caused the government to declare a state of emergency and impose compulsory vaccination measures to combat the rapid spread of the disease. ADRA Samoa activated immediately, with financial support from ADRA International, ADRA Australia, and ADRA New Zealand, to deliver bottled drinking water and dried food packs to the long queues at all the vaccination centers across Upolu.¹⁰

The New Zealand High Commission in Samoa provided the funding for ADRA Samoa to deliver meals for the medical staff at the hospitals and vaccination centers for six weeks. Because it included Christmas Day, ADRA provided gifts for all medical staff. The local company Ah Liki Investments provided food items and financial support for ADRA to deliver food packs for medical staff and the families affected by the measles. Challenged by the distances involved, especially for the outlying rural hospitals and vaccination centers, the ADRA staff of 12 worked seven-day weeks to deliver the needed aid.¹¹

ADRA Samoa is widely recognized in Samoa and throughout the region. It has become known for its humanitarian endeavours, and is a household name, especially in the rural communities where it has developed lasting relationships with village councils, families, and individuals. In addition, it has earned the respect of government leaders and international organizations. ADRA Samoa has developed close relationships with the Samoa Victim Support Group, Caritas, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, and is a member of the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Government Organizations.

In 2020 the board of ADRA Samoa is:

Chairman: Kenneth Fuliese, president, SDA Mission for Samoa and Tokelau (2015-)

Sione Ausage: general secretary, SDA Mission/Samoa and Tokelau (2013-)

Toleaofo Ben Tofilau: chief financial officer, SDA Mission/Samoa Tokelau (2010 -)

Members: Salu Moleni lene, (2010 -); Lafaitale Aiga Esera (2015-); Tifitifi Afamasaga,(2015-); Dr. Papalii Viopapa Annandale (2017-); Paulo Pelenato (2010-2013); Letoa Taylor Toeaso (2015-2019); Toleaofo Afamasaga Faitala (2010 – 2014); Greg Young, director ADRA SPD, (2010-); recording secretary: Su'a Julia Wallwork (2010-).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. This article is written largely from the personal knowledge and experience of Su'a Julia Wallwork who has been the country director of ADRA Samoa since 2010.
2. Su'a Julia Wallwork, "Samoa Builds New ADRA Office," *Record*, April 2, 2011, 3.

3. Ibid.
4. "New in Samoa," *Record*, August 18, 2012, 40.
5. Jarrod Stackelroth, "ADRA Receives NGO of the Year Award," *Record*, March 21, 2015, 3.
6. "ADRA Samoa Opens Doors," *Record*, September 21, 2013, 7.
7. "World Symposium," *Adventist Record*, September 23, 2017, 9.
8. Tracey Bridcutt, "Cyclone Damages Churches, Schools," *Adventist Record*, March 3, 2018, 4.
9. "Trauma Training," *Adventist Record*, September 22, 2018, 9.
10. Tracey Bridcutt, "ADRA Samoa Responds to Deadly Measles Outbreak," *Adventist Record*, December 21, 2019, 5.
11. Ibid.

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