**Church thanked for cyclone support**

A year ago, in the early hours of Easter Sunday, Cyclone Seroja swept across south east Indonesia and East Timor, causing loss of life and widespread devastation. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has long-standing partnerships with two churches in the areas affected by the cyclone, the Christian Evangelical Church of Timor (GMIT) and the Christian Church in Sumba. At the time, Presbyterian Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, encouraged the Church to pray for its partner churches in the region and, if possible, to give practical support to the relief effort.

As a result of donations received from Presbyterian congregations and individuals across Ireland, PCI was able to send almost £20,000 (€24,000) to support its partner churches in their relief and rebuilding work following the Cyclone.

Thanking PCI for their donation and support, Reverend Dr Mery Kolimon, Moderator of the Christian Evangelical Church of Timor, said “When our disaster response team received a donation from PCI, we were moving from our emergency response phase into the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. Some aspects of the emergency response continued however, such as logistical assistance, and distribution of food and clothing.

“Our Seroja Team is now in the process of rebuilding four minister’s homes and two church buildings, but we are doing this in a way that offers a model for other congregations to follow in the construction of disaster-resilient and eco-friendly buildings.”

Dr Kolimon continued, “The locations for these examples of resilient, eco-friendly buildings were carefully chosen in order to maximise the educational impact. Funds donated by PCI have been used to partly fund this project, but have also helped provide groceries to the most vulnerable, and in funding other repair work to damaged churches. We are very grateful to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for the support that has been of great help to us in these difficult times.”

Reverend Alfred Samani, Moderator of the Sumba Christian Church in Sumba, also thanked PCI for their support writing, “Last year’s Cyclone Seroja disaster will never be forgotten by the people of Sumba. It happened so suddenly without any warning. Its impact was devastating, with people losing their houses, their agricultural lands, and their livestock.

“The Christian Church of Sumba contributed in helping people during this difficult time. In doing this we were supported by our partners including the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Please receive our heartfelt thanks for the support of your church. At this moment of commemoration, the first anniversary of the Cyclone Seroja disaster, we remember also the togetherness in helping each other. Thank you.”

Rev Uel Marrs, Secretary to PCI’s [**Council for Global Mission**](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Mission/Global-Mission.aspx), commented, “Our relationship with our partner churches in Indonesia goes back half a century or more, and when we heard about the Cyclone we were of obviously saddened and distressed by the news, but were glad to be able to stand with them through this crisis in prayer and through practical support.

“I was also truly inspired by the [**account of one minister**](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/50733898-717b-45b6-98a0-6fc486fbdaa0/Rev-Niko-Selan-s-Report.pdf.aspx)**,**Reverend Niko Selan, serving on Alor Island, who said that even with landslides early on Easter Sunday morning, which washed away nine homes, homeless members of his congregation still asked him to lead a simple short service of worship, which he did.

Mr Marrs concluded by saying, “It is our prayer that this Easter many people around the world will gather to worship the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, despite enduring all kinds of trials and hardships. In particular, we pray that those suffering from natural disasters and war will seek and find refuge, strength and hope in God.”