



# Tropical Cyclone Winston

Fiji Government and World Food Programme  
Joint Emergency Response —  
Lessons Learned Workshop Report, April 2017



**World Food Programme**



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# 1. Executive Summary

In the search for more effective ways to provide food assistance to people affected by emergencies, WFP is exploring the use of existing government social protection schemes and social safety nets, and their related targeting mechanisms, transfer modalities and delivery mechanisms. In developing or strengthening these existing systems, WFP aims to increase the effectiveness, cost efficiency and timeliness of emergency response.

By providing complementary support to the affected population through existing government structures and channels, WFP can reduce duplication of operational components (targeting, transferring, monitoring, etc) and help develop a strong partnership with the government. By transferring assistance directly to beneficiaries to address food insecurity, such joint collaboration and cooperation can benefit the entire emergency response operation.

In February 2016, the Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Winston struck Fiji with sustained winds of up to 230 km/h. This was one of the most violent storms ever registered in the Southern Hemisphere with almost 62 percent of the population affected and losses estimated at USD 1.38 billion (corresponding to approximately 31 percent of GDP).

The Fiji National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) led the response with all national government-led clusters activated and with support from the international community. The Fiji Government requested support from the WFP, part of which was provided in the form of USD 3.4 million for food security support through cash based transfers, for an assistance period of two months (May-June 2016). WFP used the shock responsiveness capacity of the existing Fiji social safety nets (targeting and assistance delivery mechanisms) to reach over 72,000 people of those worst affected by the cyclone (12,761 households + 7,895 individuals).

A workshop was organised in Suva on 14-15 September 2016 to bring together stakeholders<sup>1</sup> involved at different levels in the joint WFP and Government Emergency Response to TC Winston, to present the achievements, opportunities and challenges of the response and to discuss opportunities to strengthen future responses to emergencies in Fiji.

Approximately 35 stakeholders participated in the workshop, including donors, government agencies, NGOs, multilateral organizations, UN Agency representatives and WFP experts from the Fiji Country Office and the Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau.

Presentations by various agencies of the Fiji Government (MOA, MOE and DSW), WFP, the World Bank and ADRA, shared the scope of work of each stakeholder, and provided a forum for stakeholders to share their experiences and findings and an opportunity to highlight the challenges encountered during the implementation of the response as well as recommendations for addressing these challenges in future (see Annex 1: Workshop Agenda).

Based on the workshop outputs, this report will review and capture the operational challenges in each area of implementation and provide some direction and concrete suggestions for the improvement of the emergency response. The recommendations from this workshop could be used, together with the recommendations from the internal lessons learned workshop held by the Fiji Government, to inform policy-making and foster capacity to build and strengthen social safety nets with a shock responsive component.

The main recommendations include the development of standby agreements and standard operating procedures (SOPs) with potential stakeholders, with clear definitions of roles, responsibilities and timeframes for the implementation of emergency response through shock responsive social safety nets. Other recommendations include the development of communications strategies and tools, information management and sharing instruments, internal and external coordination plans and mechanisms for all stakeholders involved both at the central and local levels, and improvement of emergency assessments and vulnerability analysis, types of assistance modalities and delivery mechanisms. Training of pre-selected surge staff able and the development of an M&E strategy to follow up on evolving contexts, assistance delivery processes and beneficiaries' satisfaction and recovery, are also recommended.

Ultimately, the collection and formalisation of the entire body of knowledge related to this emergency response operation could be shared at the regional Pacific governmental level, in order to facilitate the transfer of information on the strengthening of social protection schemes and their shock responsiveness, and to foster the capacity of the Fiji Government to provide support, operationally or institutionally, to neighbouring countries facing similar challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Included representatives from MOA, MoWCPA, DSW offices, World Bank, WFP, West Pac, DFAT, OCHA, and ADRA.



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The Department Of Social Welfare  
WTP - Food Voucher

Reference	SV/SP5/135/1-0516		
Recipient	Reference No:	DSW Centre	Month Year
Filipo Noiveli	SV/SP5/135/1		MAY 16
SV/SP5/135/1-0516	Amount		\$50.00
***** Fifty Dollars Only *****			
Cashing Agency Morris Hedstrom		Signature / Thana Pine	

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## 2. Introduction

### A. Fiji Country Background

The Republic of the Fiji Islands, situated in the South Pacific Ocean, is composed of an archipelago of 332 islands (of which approximately 110 are inhabited), with a total land area of approximately 18,300 km<sup>2</sup> across a geographic area of almost 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with 23.3 percent of agricultural land. A multi-ethnic population of approximately 915,300 people reside mostly on the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, with half of them living in urban settlements. The country is divided into 14 provinces and the capital Suva is situated in the southern part of the main island of Viti Levu.

Fiji is one of the wealthier countries in the Pacific, with a gross domestic product (GDP) of USD 4.53 billion and a gross national income of USD 4,870 per capita, but with an unemployment rate of 8.8 percent. Whilst the country has achieved broad coverage in the provision of basic social services, 31 percent of Fijians live below the poverty line, with a substantial “near poor” population that is vulnerable to poverty due to possible shocks (World Bank, 2011). Additionally, the functions of the current social protection systems are largely focused on protection, with the prevention and promotion functions still to be developed.

Although poverty has recently declined, a significant rural-urban variation exists, with 44 percent of the rural population and 26 percent of the urban population living in poverty respectively. Enrolment in primary education is almost universal, with a primary net enrolment rate of 96.8 percent. (World Bank 2016).

Economic growth has been strong in recent years, reaching 3.6 percent in 2013, 5.3 percent in 2014 and an estimated 4 percent in 2015, which is significantly above the 2 percent average for the period 1980–2012. Remoteness of the population, in conjunction with island dispersion, means high trade and transportation costs as well as complexity in providing public and private services.

Fiji is located in the tropical cyclone belt, and is thus affected by frequent rain and storm surges, with an average of one cyclone per year, usually from November to January. It is also situated inside the Pacific Ring of Fire,

which is associated with extreme seismic and volcanic activities, strong earthquakes and tsunamis. In addition, the country is vulnerable to extreme events associated with climate variability and changes, including sea-level rise, temperature extremes and droughts and, as a man-made environmental challenge, deforestation and soil erosion.

In the past few decades, Fiji has been affected by multiple devastating cyclones. In 2012, Fiji experienced two major flooding events and one tropical cyclone (Evans). The effects of natural disasters in Fiji are devastating, mostly impacting agriculture, housing, transport, infrastructure and tourism. Since 1980, disasters in Fiji have resulted in average annual economic damage of around FJD 35 million (USD 16.5 million) and have impacted around 40,000 people each year. Fiji is also expected to incur, on average, FJD 158 million (USD 85 million) per year in losses due to earthquakes and tropical cyclones. In the next 50 years, Fiji has a 50 percent chance of experiencing a loss exceeding FJD 1.5 billion (USD 806 million), and a 10 percent chance of experiencing a loss exceeding FJD 3 billion (USD 1.6 billion) in relation to these shocks. However, these figures may increase once the impacts of climate change are taken into consideration. (Post Disaster Needs Assessment 2016)

### B. Tropical Cyclone Winston

Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Winston struck Fiji on February 20, 2016 with sustained winds of up to 230 km/h. This was one of the most violent storms ever registered in the Southern Hemisphere. The cyclone-related losses were estimated at USD 1.38 billion (31 percent of GDP), with more than 30,000 homes destroyed, approximately 540,400 people affected (62 percent of the population) and 44 deaths. Final assessments by the Ministry of Agriculture showed that total damage to the agriculture sector amounted to FJD 208.3 million<sup>2</sup> (USD 100 million) with almost 44,522 farmers affected. The reconstruction cost was estimated at USD 940 million and the recovery phase is expected to take several years.

In the aftermath of the disaster, the Fiji National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) led the response with all national government-

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2 <http://www.pina.com.fj/?p=pacnews&m=read&o=162213907556e739290a8d0a183c98>

3 Government clusters are: Communications, WASH, Health and Nutrition, Shelter, Logistics, Food Security, Safety and Production, Education, Public Works and Utilities: [http://www.ndmo.gov.fj/images/NDMO%20OLD/Fiji\\_National\\_Cluster\\_System\\_for\\_Disaster\\_Management.pdf](http://www.ndmo.gov.fj/images/NDMO%20OLD/Fiji_National_Cluster_System_for_Disaster_Management.pdf)

led clusters<sup>3</sup> activated. Food was immediately distributed to severely affected populations in 12 identified priority areas<sup>4</sup>, accompanied by the provision of shelter and building materials for temporary rehabilitation of damaged homes.

To support the shock-affected population, in addition to the funds released and committed to this emergency operation by the Fiji Government, the country received approximately USD 33.4 million in humanitarian assistance. Of this USD 19.8 million came from the UN Flash Appeal earmarked for the response, while the remaining USD 13.6 million was unmarked funding. Approximately 60 percent of the UN Flash Appeal went to projects implemented by the government in direct response to the shock. The governments of Australia, Canada, the European Commission, Germany, Belgium, Lithuania, New Zealand, Sweden, the United States and the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund also contributed generously to the response. (World Bank, 2016)

Part of the government response was provided by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MoWCPA), in coordination with the National Disaster Management Office of Fiji (NDMO), who topped up the existing monthly social protection welfare benefits (through non-contributory cash + food vouchers) of members of the population previously identified as vulnerable with additional cash assistance for the TC Winston shock recovery. Three existing government social safety net programmes were identified as suitable for the emergency operation and reinforced with top-ups within one month of the cyclone: the "Poverty Based Scheme" (PBS), the "Care and Protection Scheme" (CPS) and "Social Pension Scheme" (SPS), with the latter providing support to almost 15 percent of the country's older people. While PBS beneficiaries received a top-up of FJD 600 in cash, the CPS families and SPS beneficiaries each received a top-up of FJD 300. (See Table 1 below)

Government support also took the form of housing assistance to rebuild damaged housing (Help for Homes), for affected households with an annual income of less than FJD 50,000. Government grants were disbursed as follows: FJD 1,500 for households with partial roofing damage, FJD 3,000 for households with serious roofing damage and FJD 7,000 for households with almost completely destroyed roofing.

**Table 1: Fiji Government social welfare programmes and government top-up benefits for the response to TC Winston**

Safety Net Schemes	Safety Net Target Groups	Number of Beneficiaries	Regular Fiji Government Safety Net Benefits	Additional Top-up for TC Winston Response
PBS	Households in the poorest 10% of the population	23,035 households, or 90,000 individuals (10% of population)	FJD 30 cash through bank accounts, per person (for up to four HH members) + FJD 50 in Food Voucher*, or max. FJD 170	FJD 600 as a lump sum
CPS	Disadvantaged households (facing special needs) with children	3,257 households or 12,725 individuals (11.4% of population)	FJD 110 cash through bank accounts (maximum amount) + FJD 50 in Food Voucher*	FJD 300 as a lump sum

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