



UN WOMEN IN THE PACIFIC

MAY 2016 | SPECIAL ISSUE: TROPICAL CYCLONE WINSTON



Moving forward together



Sumila Wati, Dhanbhagium Maraj and Sharika Rikashni selling at the makeshift Rakiraki Market shelter just 10 days after Cyclone Winston hit. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

In March 2015 the Pacific experienced one of the most brutal storms in living memory when Tropical Cyclone Pam caused damage in Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Kiribati, and devastation in Vanuatu. Just under a year later, Fiji was in the firing line, experiencing the wrath of Tropical Cyclone Winston – the strongest storm ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere.

Winston hit on February 20, packing wind gusts of more than 300kmph. Entire villages were flattened, crops were destroyed, essential infrastructure was severely damaged; just under half of Fiji’s population was directly affected.

Early recovery was further complicated by severe flooding in early April, sending thousands back into evacuation centres and destroying recently replanted crops.

Just over two months after the cyclone, the response continues and will soon start to move into the recovery phase, shaped by a number of assessments that have either already taken place, or are ongoing.

At each stage UN Women has provided a mixture of technical and financial support, leveraging our resources and relationships to help ensure women and girls have equal access to support services and that their needs are integrated at all levels of the response and recovery phases.

As we look towards this month’s World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey, the lessons learned from Winston will further help to reshape humanitarian action to make it more people-focused and inclusive — and fundamentally more effective.



TC WINSTON (L-R): Market vendors selling bananas under the bus shelter in Rakiraki just days after the cyclone with the ruined market in the background. Credit: UN Women/Vilisi Veibataki; the roll call for eight families living in the Korotale Narara Kindergarten in Buka Settlement, just outside of Rakiraki. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd; lack of running water in the immediate aftermath meant women were washing clothes and bathing in creeks like this. Credit: UN Women/Preeya Ieli.

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Strength in adversity

Welcome to this special issue of the “UN Women in the Pacific” newsletter. It is our way of keeping in touch; spreading the word about our programmes, our staff, our partners and more.

In this issue you’ll find a range of stories covering the work that UN Women and our partners are doing to highlight and meet the needs of women and girls in the wake of Cyclone Winston. Perhaps more importantly, it also showcases the Fijian people’s incredible resilience, something that I have been privileged to witness firsthand.

The passion, determination, empathy and creativity that I have seen from partners, stakeholders, our staff and women themselves during this time is characteristic of what I have seen across the Pacific since my arrival in Fiji.

The recovery process will be long and complex, but I’m proud of the role that UN Women is playing, and will continue to play, in ensuring it is inclusive and sustainable.

Aleta Miller
Representative
UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office

Picking up the pieces



Salote Tubua and her family outside what remains of one of their two houses. The other was ripped apart by Winston. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

On the night of the cyclone Salote Tubua and her family were at home in Buka Settlement just outside of Rakiraki.

“The wind was too strong. It ripped our house apart so we ran to our second house. Then a tree fell and ripped the roof open so we escaped to a neighbour’s house.”

That home was also destroyed so they took cover under a bed until morning.

Flooding from the small river that runs past their houses took all their belongings. It was Monday morning before they managed to swim across and take shelter in the Korotale Narara Kindergarten.

“We have started collecting the pieces of roofing iron so we can at least put our house back together until we can get some help to build our house properly.”

Salote, 42, and her husband have 12 children, five of whom are still in school. Twice a week, Salote used to take produce she grew in their small vegetable plot to Rakiraki Market. This earned between \$20 and \$25 a day to help with the children’s school expenses. Ten days after the cyclone she was back at the market.

“The cassava that I’m selling will only last me till next week, after that I do not know what to sell.”

Addressing the needs of women and girls

Empower Pacific staff were some of the first to reach some of the communities that were worst affected by Cyclone Winston.

Under normal circumstances the organisation provides professional counselling and social work services. During the cyclone response, their counsellors have been carrying out psycho-social assessments in affected communities and evacuation sites, gathering information on the kind of services and support that is required. So far they have reached more than 15,000 people.

Through these assessments they identify the risk factors associated with the physical environment, living situation, nutrition, mental health, and behaviours. Their assessments feed into the official response efforts coordinated by Fiji’s Disaster Management Committee.

“I describe our role as we look, listen and link,” explains Bimla Madavan, a senior counsellor. “We do assessments on the spot looking at emergency needs, identify any gaps and link people with the services they need.”

While flattened houses, destroyed crops and flooded villages are easier to identify, the psychological toll is not immediately apparent and can be pushed aside while families focus on securing food, water and shelter.



Empower Pacific counsellors Sisilia Siga, Bimla Madavan and Saral Chand. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

“We can see the pain in their eyes, in their hearts,” Ms Madavan continues. “They are back to square one and they have so much grief. At this time, we can only supply a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on.”

UN Women provided immediate funding to Empower Pacific to ensure their counsellors could get into the field as quickly as possible. Further funding is being provided to help fund follow-up visits, counselling and case management as well as initial assessments in isolated communities.

Read the full story: <http://ow.ly/ZMH6F>

story from the field

Collecting the stories of Winston

UN Women’s Regional Communications and Media Specialist, Ellie van Baaren, spent several days travelling around Viti Levu collecting stories from market vendors, farmers and partner organisations after Tropical Cyclone Winston.

“The first thing that hits you about a country that has felt the full force of a category five cyclone is the trees. It’s like they have been ravaged by a forest fire, one that strips them of their foliage but otherwise leaves no visible scorch marks. Unfortunately, I was seeing this for the second time in less than a year. Surveying the damage, talking to women who are battered and exhausted—but far from broken – by Mother Nature’s fury.

Being based in Fiji, for me it hit much closer to home—literally and figuratively. Many of the women I had talked to over the past two years had lost everything. They would have to start again, some with even less than the first time.



UN Women’s Ellie van Baaren interviews Lusiana Bulu, the Secretary of the Ba Market Vendors’ Association. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

Despite their own losses, many of the people I talked to were concerned for their fellow market vendors and the rest of their community, some of whom had lost everything. They were all quietly working to support each other in whatever way they could so they could back to some kind of normal as soon as possible.

And that’s what stays with me long after I thank my interviewees and head back to my comfy office. The sheer resilience in these women and their communities is astonishing, but ultimately unsurprising. I see it and hear it every time I interview a woman taking part in one of our programmes, every time I observe one of our partner organisations in action. It just shines a little brighter when they’re faced with such dark times.”

Read the full story: <http://ow.ly/4nmthi>

SNAPSHOT: #StrongerThanWinston



1| One of the many houses in Viti Levu's Western Division that were badly damaged by Cyclone Winston. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. 2| Miliakere Tavaga, vice president of the Tavua Market Vendors' Association, and her daughter back at the market. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. 3| UN Women Representative in Fiji, Aleta Miller, speaks at the official handover of tents provided for a temporary market space in Rakiraki. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. 4| The Rakiraki accommodation centre that provided a safe space for rural women to stay overnight was destroyed by a falling tree. Credit: UN Women/Anna Parini. 5| Lusiana Bulu and husband Lukekalevu at their stall at Ba Market. Credit: UN Women/ Murray Lloyd. 6| Two weeks after the cyclone, Korotale Narara Kindergarten just outside Rakiraki was serving as a temporary shelter for eight families, including these two. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. 7| Rakesh Prakash, his wife and parents hid under the bed for six hours while Cyclone Winston took most of their house. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. 8| A market vender at Rakiraki Market. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren

SNAPSHOT: #StrongerThanWinston



1] Julie Bishop, Australia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, with Parveen Kumar, Fiji's Minister of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment (L) with Rakiraki market vendors. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren. **2]** Raneel Prasad at Tavua market. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. **3]** The remains of Rakiraki Market. Credit: UN Women/Anna Parini. **4]** Gordon Wong, Lautoka Market Master, with donations from local market vendors for fellow vendors in affected areas. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. **5]** Winston's winds gusted to more than 300kmph, stripping the local trees of their foliage. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd. **6]** Julie Bishop, Australia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, with Rakiraki market vendors during her visit. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren. **7]** Rakiraki Town Council staff help erect tents provided by UN Women to act as a temporary market space. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

For more photos visit UN Women Pacific's Flickr albums: <http://ow.ly/ZMTUj>

Temporary market space for vendors



Rakiraki Town Council staff help put up the tents provided by UN Women to serve as a temporary market space. Photo credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd

The Rakiraki Market used to house more than 200 vendors, 76% of whom were women. The only shelter left standing has room for a quarter of that number and many of the tables and chairs that were kept in the market have been damaged or destroyed.

As part of its Markets for Change project, UN Women provided four tents as well as extra tables and chairs to serve as a temporary market space for as many vendors as possible until the new market building is built.

The tents were officially handed over to Rakiraki Town Council and the Minister for Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment on Thursday 10 March, followed by a visit from Australia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, on Monday 14 March.

"This temporary market space is just one step

towards helping market vendors get back on their feet," says UN Women Representative Aleta Miller.

"This is important not only because the market is a place for women to make a living, but also because it provides an opportunity for them to share their experiences and support each other."

The Markets for Change project works across 10 markets in Fiji, in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and municipal councils, and is funded by the Australian Government. In the longer-term, UN Women will be working with partners towards reconstructing markets destroyed by the cyclone.

Three tents have also been handed over to Nadi Market, and another for Namaka Market. A further three will be provided to Tavua Market.

Read the full story: <http://ow.ly/ZMP7L>

Shaping the recovery process

Different groups in society experience disasters differently. A house for a woman is often more than a place to sleep and eat; it is also her office, her security, and her place of childcare, which means losing it has different implications. It is these kinds of differences that make gender such an important consideration in the recovery process.

The Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) in Fiji focuses on the social and economic impact of Tropical Cyclone Winston and the results will guide the recovery framework, including identifying recovery priorities and the resources that are needed.

Led by the government, PDNA involves global, regional and local organisations and UN Women is taking a leading role in ensuring that gender concerns are highlighted and integrated in every sector assessment.

Cecilia Aipira, UN Women's Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy Advisor, says the human impact of Winston is just as



Market vendor Dhanbhagium Maraj at Rakiraki Market. Credit: UN Women/Ellie van Baaren.

important as the physical impact, but it is harder to calculate.

"The PDNA is about making the invisible visible, not only to ensure more holistic recovery efforts, but also to help build material and human resilience towards future disasters."

The PDNA was completed at the end of April and is currently being reviewed by the Fijian Government.

on the ground

2,080

The number of market vendor-farmers who will receive seeds, tools and/or equipment from UN Women activities through a partnership with FAO, and funding from the Australian Government.

"AS A PERSON, THE FACT THAT I GOT THE CHANCE TO GO OUT AND BE OF USE TO THOSE WHO WERE SO VULNERABLE, I FIND IT A PRIVILEGE AND WE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MOBILISE WITHOUT SUPPORT WE RECEIVED FROM UN WOMEN."

Saral Chand, Counsellor, Empower Pacific.

500

The number of market vendors in affected areas, including 300 mostly rural women, who can sell from temporary market spaces thanks to tents provided by UN Women with funding from the Australian Government.

15,000

The number of men, women and children that have received counselling via Empower Pacific, with funding from UN Women

Supporting communities and each other



Varanise Maisamoa with clothing, bedding and cooking supplies that she donated to other market vendors. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd

“We are trying to rebuild our lives because life has to go on. Right now we have to be brave and put a smile on our faces and try to move on. That’s all we can do.”

For the past 11 years Varanise Maisamoa has been selling fish, cooked food and fresh produce at Rakiraki Market. On a good day she could make between \$100 and \$150 profit, which paid for the water bill, her children’s schooling and medical care, and transport.

Cyclone Winston has changed everything.

The market has been destroyed. Local farmers have very little to sell so wholesale prices have tripled. Instead Varanise has to close her stall for two days each week to travel in search of produce that she can sell. First it was Sigatoka; then she found a supplier near Nausori.

“All of us lost so much,” she says. “I couldn’t speak for two days. Everything we prepared in

January for our son’s schooling is gone, as well as the roof and some of the walls but we are lucky we are alive.”

Varanise, her husband, and their four daughters sheltered in their toilet for five hours through the worst of the cyclone. At boarding school in Tailevu, her son ran for his life. When the storm cleared she sent her children with her sister to the local evacuation centre; she and her husband spent two days sleeping in the car to ward off looters.

Despite this, she still sees herself as one of the luckier ones; she prepared well and managed to save a lot of the family’s belongings. Many of her fellow market vendors have lost everything, so she donated half of what she had left to help them get back on their feet.

“I love this community. Everyone is your friend; everyone is your neighbour. After the cyclone, the women vendors came to the market to sit and talk. Sometimes we sit there silent and cry.”

Flooded farm undermines livelihood

Raj Wati and her family relied on their pawpaw plantation in Sigatoka as their main source of income.

The money they earned was reinvested in the farm, while anything that was left over went towards the family’s groceries and her grandchildren’s school supplies. Now she’s uncertain about the future.

Her latest crop had been cut and removed, ready for planting after the rainy season had passed. Cyclone Winston destroyed it all. The rest of the crop, which was growing by the river, has also been destroyed by the flooding.

“We don’t know how long we will have produce. Maybe next week we will not have anything to bring to the market.”

In the meantime Raj is looking into planting



Raj Wati points to the part of her farm in Sigatoka destroyed by flooding. Credit: UN Women/Kasanita Isimeli.

some short-term crops while looking for support to replant her farm.

Assessment crucial to ongoing activities

Understanding gender and protection concerns in the aftermath of a disaster is vital to ensure humanitarian accountability to affected populations and the effectiveness of the response in meeting the needs of the most affected and to address their specific concerns.

As the Co-leads of the Safety and Protection Cluster, UN Women and UNICEF supported the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in coordinating an inter-organisational protection assessment to identify protection needs and priorities of the population as exacerbated by TC Winston.

The assessment comprised 25 assessors from Government, local and international NGOs, civil society organisations, and UN agencies in 35 locations in urban, rural and remote hard to reach affected areas. They talked to women and men community leaders and representatives, and conducted focus group discussions across the country to solicit information and experiences from women and girls, boys and men including older persons, persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTI community.



Participants at the assessor training. Credit: UN Women/Marie Pettersson.

The assessors all took part in a training to ensure not only that the data they collected was accurate and useful, but also that they were as well prepared as possible for the different sensitivities and challenges involved in collecting the information.

Following a debrief session with the assessors and a technical consultation with key technical experts, the findings are undergoing final analysis. Preliminary analysis reveals clear and specific impacts on women, adolescent girls and children, which require immediate, medium and long-term follow up actions. The final assessment report will be launched within May 2016.

The assessment and its findings will inform and provide the evidence-basis for humanitarian response and recovery efforts, supporting efforts to bridge the humanitarian-development divide.

Getting the response right for women



Asenaca Salusalu and her family lost everything except the clothes they were wearing and continued to shelter in the centre for at least a week after the cyclone. Credit: UN Women/Anna Parini

While it's essential to move fast in the aftermath of a disaster such as Winston, a lack of coordination between the wide range of actors involved in response can cause even more harm; some people and needs get attention from multiple corners, while others fall through the cracks. To stop this from happening, the Fiji Government activated the cluster system.

Each cluster is responsible for coordinating efforts to meet a different need, such as shelter or health, bringing together Government departments, UN agencies, NGOs and community groups with the most relevant resources and relationships to not only identify the gaps, but also to fill them.

In Fiji, the Safety and Protection Cluster is responsible for ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society are met. It is led by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, with UN Women and UNICEF as co-leads; the Ministry is also leading

the Gender-based Violence in Emergencies sub-cluster, with UN Women as co-lead. It is the first time UN Women has taken a leadership role in the cluster system.

"There's a proverb that if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. I think this has characterised the Winston response," says UN Women representative Aleta Miller. "It has been an immensely positive experience of women's and children's protection actors, as well as advocates for people with disabilities and LGBTI populations, working well together,"

An example of the Cluster's work, is that for the first time in Fiji, survivors of violence have a clear national referral pathway to help them access the support and services they need from any organisation – from medical treatment to counselling to reporting. Such a tool is relevant in the aftermath of a disaster and in normal times.

Read the full article: <http://ow.ly/4nmuOY>

Preventing and responding to violence

In the aftermath of a disaster, women and girls face even higher risks of violence than they do under ordinary circumstances. Tropical Cyclone Winston is no exception, with reports of violence and exploitation of survivors surfacing immediately after the storm.

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) is one of the organisations providing training and technical support to first responders, and counselling for survivors.

Coordinator Shamima Ali says their workshops help those working on the frontlines of the response recognise the signs of violence and how to respond, as well as providing an opportunity for the trainers and participants to discuss and share their experiences from the field.

The first of such workshops was held in the Western Division, involving representatives of the government, Fiji Red Cross, Empower Pacific, the Aspire Network and others working in affected communities.



Fiji Women's Crisis Centre Coordinator Shamima Ali (front, centre) with participants at a workshop held Nadi recently for first responders. Credit: Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

UN Women provided FWCC with funding in the early days after the cyclone to help ensure their clients in affected areas have access to relief supplies and safe homes. Further funding is being provided to continue training, outreach and awareness, and response services during the emergency phase.

Read the full story: <http://ow.ly/10kXTa>

Long-term support needed

Within hours of the cyclone hitting, Fiji Red Cross was mobilising volunteers and staff across the country to distribute relief items including dignity packs for women, tarpaulins and family hygiene kits.

Since then, the organisation has also been involved in the initial assessments and is now training its volunteers to provide psycho-social support.

"This is one of the most difficult disasters that Fiji has encountered," explains Dr Setareki Vatucawaqa (pictured), Programmes Director at Fiji Red Cross. "Communities were totally devastated. Our volunteers faced people who had lost their whole life's work in a couple of hours."



Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

The Fiji Red Cross is a grantee of UN Women's Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women Facility Fund, originally receiving funding and technical support to create a set of educational materials around gender-based violence in emergencies.

In the aftermath of the cyclone, UN Women worked with the organisation to update and finalise those materials so they could be distributed to affected communities to help them identify violence and point them in the right direction if they need assistance.

"Our partners have been a great source of support and strength for us. And it's reassuring to see the kindness pouring out of the community – from businesses, different groups and individuals."

Effectively dealing with the level of shock and trauma in affected communities will involve long-term follow-up support to monitor safety, progress and mental health.

"There is an innate ability in everyone to cope, but sometimes they need support to reconnect to those abilities and to the people who will help them do it," Dr Vatucawaqa says.

"Our staff are trained to be a listening ear, a comforting voice and to look for warning signs so that we can connect people with the services they need."

Women crucial for food security



Rakesh Prasad (middle), his brother Sanesh Kumar and Lusiana Bulu, the Secretary of the Ba Market Vendors' Association stand with what remains of part of a 10-acre farm. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd.

Before the cyclone Rakesh Prakash and his family relied on the income they received from the produce they harvested on their 10-acre farm in Toge, near Ba. Twice a week they would harvest 300-400kg of eggplant, chillies, cow peas and spinach and take it to the local market to sell to market vendors, who would then on-sell it to the public.

While Rakesh, his wife and parents hid under their bed, flooding caused by Tropical Cyclone Winston destroyed the majority of those crops. The loss has undermined not only his own family's livelihood, but also that of the 15-20 market vendors and countless customers who relied on his produce each day.

Women play an essential part in every part of Fiji's food supply chain. They are usually responsible for sourcing the food their families need to survive, they are heavily involved in subsistence farming, and they make up the majority of market vendors around the country.

Tropical Cyclone Winston's early legacy is a shortage of local fresh produce, especially in the west, which not only pushes up prices but also makes it harder for women to source food – whether it is to eat or to sell.

"The main problem is that customers have no money," explains Manjula Wati from Vunisamalaoa in Ba. "They are relying on rations and they can't get any money because they can't go to work because there is no power. I go to the farmers but the price is so high and then we can't sell it."

Gordon Wong, the Market Master at Lautoka market is already seeing evidence of people

having to make a choice between buying greens at the market or buying at the supermarket.

"Tables are empty because there is not enough produce. Those who are well established are the ones getting the supplies because they are better organised and can buy in bulk. Smaller vendors are suffering the most," he says.



Manjula Wati, 50, has been selling at Ba Market for 16 years and normally sells fresh produce that she grows on her farm. Credit: UN Women/Murray Lloyd

UN Women representative Aleta Miller says women's economic empowerment is critical in safeguarding food security at all levels.

"Women's roles in agriculture and food supply do make them more vulnerable in times like this, however, it also means they have critical knowledge that can help the sector recover quicker and more effectively. It is essential that we recognise this and ensure that women are fully included in all levels of the response and recovery efforts."

Read the full story: <http://ow.ly/ZMOe8>

social media

Top posts

Help keep #Fiji women & girls safe & rebuild: <http://ow.ly/YLFja>
@UNWomenAust #TCWinston #StrongerThanWinston

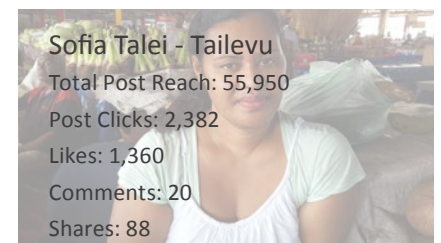


Tweet impressions: 38,374
Retweets: 84
Likes: 56

Our team stands ready to assist #Fiji government to ensure that #TCWinston #humanitarian efforts respond to the needs of #women & #girls.



Tweet impressions: 26,561
Retweets: 36
Likes: 52



Sofia Talei - Tailevu

Total Post Reach: 55,950
Post Clicks: 2,382
Likes: 1,360
Comments: 20
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Women's economic empowerment critical 4 safeguarding food security: <http://ow.ly/ZMnfk> #TCWinston #Fiji



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Retweets: 47
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women & girls need 2b at the core of disaster risk reduction: <http://ow.ly/YUSVB> v @UN_News_Centre #TCWinston



Tweet impressions: 22,870
Retweets: 51
Likes: 32



Unaisi Racaca - Lautoka

Total Post Reach: 40,389
Post Clicks: 1,197
Likes: 386
Comments: 9
Shares: 75