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Information bulletin

Fiji: Floods/Tropical depression

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation. The Fiji Red Cross Society (FRCS) will, however, accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected population.

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Entrance to Nadi Town. Photo by Shiri Ram (www.imaginesouthpacific.com)

The situation

Since Thursday 29 March, a tropical depression has caused extensive flooding in Fiji, particularly in the Western Division. In some places, more than 300mm of rain fell in less than 24 hours. The initial downpour caused flash flooding in the Western District of Viti Levu which is still recovering from the January/February 2012 floods. The rain had continued over Friday, 30 March to Sunday, 1 April, which further worsened the flooding from Rakiraki to Sigatoka. The weekend rains also resulted in flooding of outlying areas of Suva. On the afternoon of Monday, 2 April it was confirmed that a tropical depression had formed into a cyclone 600km South West of Fiji, 'Cyclone Daphne'. Cyclone Daphne did not make landfall in Fiji but brought extra rain and strong winds to the affected areas.

The current situation is affecting a large proportion of population on Viti Levu. As of yesterday morning the Government was reporting that there were 172 evacuation centres open in the Western and Central Districts of Fiji housing 13,906 displaced people.

Western District Evacuation Centres

DISTRICTS	No: of EVACUATION CENTRES	ADULTS	CHILDREN	TOTAL
RA	6	42	42	84
TAVUA	6	304	234	538
BA	31	896	646	1542
LTK	19	592	394	986
NADI	38	3534	2197	5731
NADROGA/NAVOSA	54	2713	1593	4306
TOTAL	154	8081	5106	13,187

(SOURCE: Fiji NDMO sitrep14, 3 April, 0000hrs)

Central District Evacuation Centres

SRL	DISTRICT	NO. OF ECs	Adult	Child	Total no of people
01	Naitasiri	5	74	50	124
02	Rewa	9	246	214	460
03	Tailevu	4	76	59	135
	TOTAL	18	396	323	719

(SOURCE: Fiji NDMO sitrep14, 3 April, 0000hrs)

Four people have died and there are currently three young boys missing at sea. Fiji's only international airport has been closed to incoming passengers since Friday, 29 March but is open to passengers needing to leave Fiji.

A government spokesman said the situation is already worse than the January floods, with twice as much rainwater falling in half as much time. Most of Viti Levu is without electricity and rotating power blackouts are in place to allow most industries to operate during the day and domestic users in the evening. On the afternoon of Sunday, 1 April, the Fiji Government declared a "State of Natural Disaster" in areas in Ra, Ba, Nadroga, and Navosa Province but there has not been a request for international assistance thus far.

The Western Division is the worst affected, particularly the main towns of Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, Tavua, Ba and Rakiraki, all of which have been flooded in some places up to two meters of water. Water and electricity supplies are disrupted in the Western Division, affecting approximately 150,000 people. The extent of damage to houses, schools and infrastructure is currently unknown as access to communities is difficult. The Water Authority Fiji (WAF) reports that in Ba, Tavua, Rakiraki and Sigatoka, all pumping stations are out of operation and there is no inflow into treatment plants. In some areas of Nadi and Lautoka it is expected there will be no supply of water due to low pressure. The hospital and airport have reserved supplies.

Currently there is still an active trough of low pressure with remaining slow-moving cloud and rain over the Fiji islands. Fiji is expecting the rain to continue sporadically over the next week and flood warnings still remain in place for affected areas.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

MANAGEMENT AND OVERALL COORDINATION

Currently, accessibility to the flood-affected areas is very limited. Most branch volunteers' homes and families have also been affected by the floodwaters. As a result it is difficult to fully assess the full impact of the flooding at this stage. Fiji Red Cross Society's (FRCS) National Headquarters' emergency operation centre (EOC) was activated on Saturday, 31 March. The National Office team is coordinating with National Disaster Management Office and partners in planning for a faster and better response in assisting the affected families with FRCS's supplies.

FRCS's National Office has created a four-team response operation: two teams are to be deployed to the West and establish an EOC in Nadi, one team has been deployed to the Suva area to work with the Commissioner Central's EOC and there will also be one mobile logistics team that will be based in Nadi to supply relief stock to Western branches. The overall coordination will be managed out of the National Office by the Disaster Management's coordinator and management. They will also be managing the collation of overall information and stakeholder engagement. The objectives of the teams being deployed to the field are to assess the current situation and provide feedback to the National Office for the branches' needs while supporting the branches in EOC development, assessment, relief distribution and reporting. Anticipated time for deployment of field-based teams is in the next 24 hours.

ASSESSMENTS AND NON FOOD ITEMS (NFIs)

Most of the volunteers in the Western Division branches are waiting for improved weather conditions to be able to be mobilized and conduct assessments and distribute relief items. Where it is possible, this is already taking place. FRCS will be on standby until there are improvements in weather and in the meantime will continue liaising with partners.

In the first deployment, the mobile team will be focusing on deploying stocks from National Office and surrounding containers. FRCS's National Office is currently restocking relief items for extended distribution and is sourcing from local suppliers but there may be a need to source emergency items regionally.

SAFE DRINKING WATER

FRCS has received 50,000 household water treatment tablets which will be distributed to the affected area through trained volunteers as part of a household water treatment kit. Four 5000L water tanks have also been dispatched to support NDMO with providing a sufficient quantity of safe drinking water in the affected area.

Additional water storage tanks and water treatment tablets are also currently being sourced through the support of partners if additional safe drinking water needs are identified in the assessment.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE PROMOTION

The FRCS trained branch volunteers are also supporting the Ministry of Health by providing good hygiene behaviour messages to the displaced people in evacuation centres.

The FRCS health team are working on a distribution plan for Hygiene, Dignity and household water treatment kits as well as extra relief supplies for babies. As of Tuesday 3 April volunteers began packing 300 household water treatment kits, which contain collapsible water containers, tablets for household water treatment and educational materials explaining tablet use. The volunteers also packed 713 Hygiene Kits containing toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, washing powder, candles, matches, mosquito coils, condoms, sanitary pads, first aid information, STI information and hand washing education materials.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- **National Society:** Acting Director General, Christopher Ho; office phone: +679 331 4133; +679 999 2505; email:operations@redcross.com.fj.
- **IFRC regional office:** Regional Disaster Management coordinator, Ysabeau Rycx; office phone: +679 331 1855; email: Ysabeau.rycx@ifrc.org.
- **IFRC Zone:** Operations Coordinator, Christine Strater; office phone : +60 3 9207 5727; mobile phone : +6012 2130 149; email: christine.strater@ifrc.org.



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1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.