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Information bulletin

Fiji and Tonga: Tropical Cyclone Winston

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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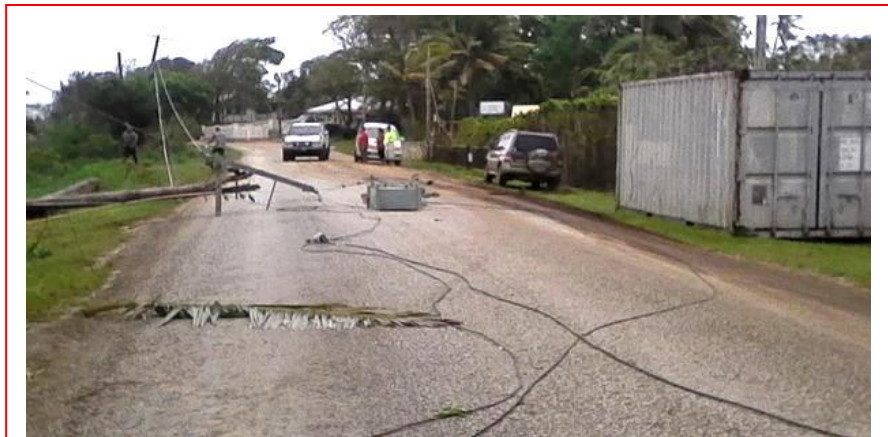
This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Fiji Red Cross Society, with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), is currently determining the need for international assistance. International assistance has not been considered by the Tonga Red Cross Society at this time. This may change as the situation develops. < [click here for detailed contact information](#) >

The situation

Tonga

Tropical Cyclone Winston (category 4) passed north of Vava'u (population 15,000) in Tonga for a second time in the morning of 19 February 2016 bringing sustained winds to the surrounding islands.

The National Emergency Management Committee has agreed to release USD 89,480 to support the Immediate Relief Response Plan for Tropical Cyclone Winston as well as the Response Plan for the Zika Virus. The Tonga's National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) estimated the damages caused by the cyclone are lesser than expected mainly because of the cyclone's more northerly course in relation to Vava'u. This is the third time the area has been affected by a cyclone this year. The NEMO reports that it is looking at securing resources locally from partners already on the ground.



Tropical Cyclone Winston affected Tonga on 18 February causing damage to infrastructure. As of 20 February, TC Winston has now increased to Category 5 and is currently affecting the south coast of Vanua Levu in Fiji. Photo: New Zealand Herald.

Fiji

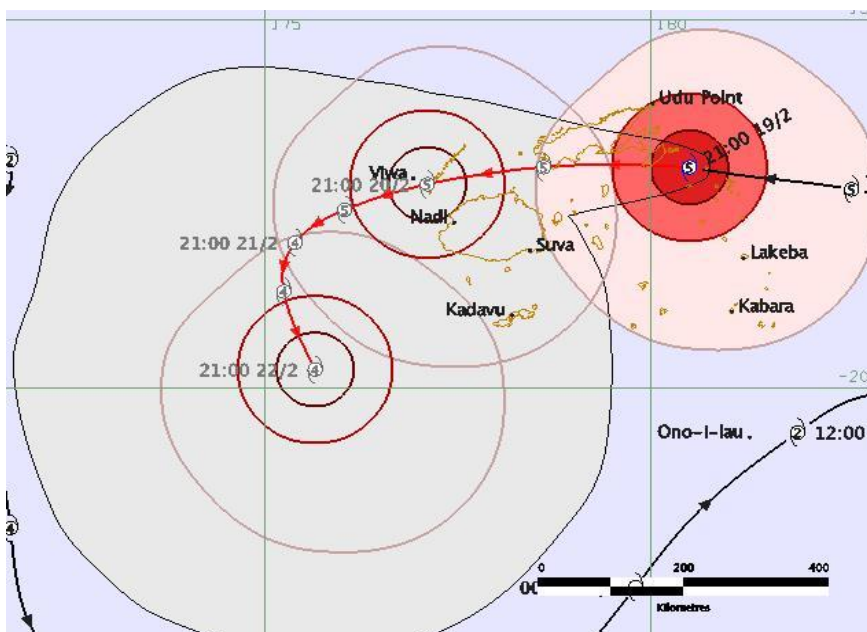
As of the afternoon of 19 February, **Tropical Cyclone Winston increased its intensity to Category 5**. As of the morning of 20 February, it was located near 17.2s 178.7w., 120 km north of Lekeba or 320km east-north east of Suva. The cyclone is moving west at approximately 25 km per hour. Maximum average winds near the centre are estimated at about 200 km per hour. Closer to the centre, the cyclone is estimated to have average winds of 220 km per hour and momentary gusts of 315 km per hour. The cyclone is currently moving north of Viti Levu. On this track, the cyclone is expected to be located 200km northwest of Lakeba or 170 km northeast of Suva at 5.00pm and about 350 km west-northwest of Lakeba or 100 km north-northwest of Suva at 5.00am on Sunday 21 February. The Government of Fiji has declared a state of emergency at 1.00 pm on Saturday.

The Fiji Meteorological Service is warning the country to prepare for increasingly stronger winds as Tropical Cyclone Winston returns for the third time. The cyclone has increased its intensity to Category 5. The cyclone will bring about destructive winds and flash flooding in parts of the central division and considerable damage is expected in the southern coast of Vanua Levu (estimated population 135,000).

The Fiji's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is urging people to secure their homes, properties, businesses or their livestock as Tropical Cyclone Winston approaches the country. Both the Nadi Weather Office and disaster officials are closely tracking the movement of the cyclone.

A total of 80 evacuation centres have been activated across the country and some 144 families are currently seeking shelters in these centres. Schools and markets have been closed, government hospitals are on standby, while electricity supply in the country is not affected.

The situation remains fluid, and partners continue to monitor the situation over the coming hours. The picture below depicts the latest estimated trajectory as at 2218 UTC on Friday, 19 February¹:



The forecast path shown above is Nadi's best estimate of the cyclone's future movement and intensity. Source: <http://www.met.gov.fj/>

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Tonga Red Cross Society (TRCS):

TRCS has visited the evacuation centres that are currently housing the evacuees. The hospital in Vava'u has been reported as fully operational. Assessments are being conducted and further information will be available once completed.

In addition, TRCS has provided an update on their prepositioned stock, which is adequate for Vava'u at this stage. The Government of Tonga relies on the close cooperation with TRCS to meet the immediate needs of the affected people.

Fiji Red Cross Society (FRCS):

In preparation of the cyclone making landfall in Fiji, an emergency meeting was called and attended by FRCS (including senior management team), IFRC and other in-country Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners. FRCS and IFRC also attended the Pacific Humanitarian Team meeting on 20 February. FRCS has released its own funds (FJD 380,000) to support preparedness and response.

The FRCS Headquarters (HQ) has been in close contact with all division coordinators as well as all 14 branches by providing them with situation updates. All FRCS branches are on standby, although there are no volunteers in Lau group. In the northern division, FRCS volunteers are supporting the local authorities in the emergency centres.



Tonga Red Cross dispatched mosquito nets among other prepositioned items to Vava'u. Photo: New Zealand Red Cross/ Hanna Butler

¹ Nadi Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre, extracted from http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs_prods/65661.html

More than 400 families have been evacuated, as the impact is expected to spread across Viti Levu, the south of Vanua Levu and the Western divisions, unless the cyclone changes course.

An Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) has been set up in the FRCS HQ with a team on standby in 12-hour shifts. The National Society's contingency and disaster management plans have been activated. Emergency Response Team (ERT) members, equipment and vehicles are on stand-by and disaster preparedness stocks are ready to be dispatched as soon as needed.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC):

A coordination teleconference call has been organized today between IFRC (country cluster support team in Suva and regional office in Kuala Lumpur) and Pacific National Societies (Australian Red Cross, Fiji Red Cross Society and New Zealand Red Cross, and Tonga Red Cross Society). The IFRC Suva country cluster support team (CCST) has activated its business continuity plan and is bracing itself for TC Winston to arrive. The available stock reports from Pacific National Societies have been shared and analysed to prepare for potential dispatch of non-food items (NFI) to affected island communities.

Additional support has been offered, and the teams will remain in close contact and re-evaluate support needs. Delegates from Pacific National Societies are also on stand-by for deployment if needed.

Contact Information

For further information, please contact:

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For Performance and Accountability (planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting enquiries)

- Peter Ophoff, head of PMER, email: peter.ophoff@ifrc.org



[Click here](#)

1. [Return](#) to the title page
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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to **inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the **maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world**.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.
