STRENGTHENING HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN Fiji

STRENGTHENING PREPAREDNESS DURING A HIGH RISK PERIOD: THE STRONGEST LA NINA ON RECORD

REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL PREPOSITIONED SUPPLIES

Background

It is well known that the Pacific is particularly vulnerable to disasters. What is less frequently commented upon is the consistency in the type of humanitarian needs which are generated by disasters in this region. Disasters in Fiji almost invariably generate humanitarian need in the area of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).

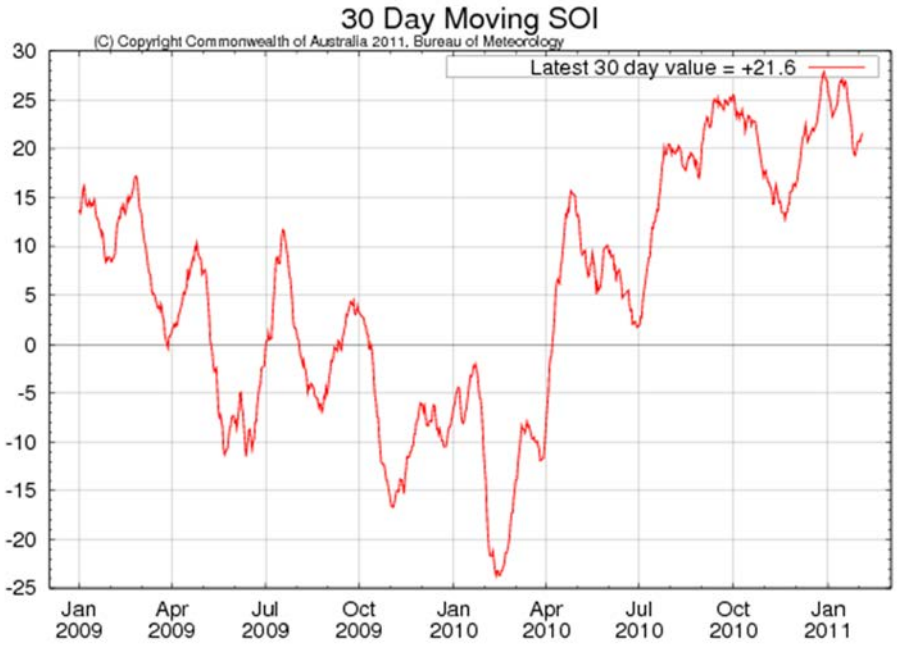
The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) records that in the period from 1900 to 2011 there have been the following incidences of disaster in Fiji:

Drought	2
Earthquake	2
Flood	*9*
Tsunami	1
Storm/Tropical Cyclone	*34*

Droughts cause WASH needs through scarcity of water and lack of access to clean drinking water. Earthquakes can, although do not always, cause problems with WASH through damage to water infrastructure such as wells and gravity fed pipes, either directly or through secondary hazards such as landslides. Landslides often also foul open water sources. Tsunamis damage water and sanitation infrastructure through the destructive wave and can foul water sources close to the coast with saline water and waste from sanitation systems. Floods and tropical cyclones are particularly serious from a WASH perspective because they damage water and sanitation infrastructure and also cause a scarcity of clean drinking water.

In the disasters to have affected Fiji since 2009 (Tropical Cyclone Tomas, Tropical Cyclone Mick, the 2009 Fiji Floods) WASH has been a major component of the humanitarian needs generated and the subsequent response.

The first half of 2011 is forecast by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology to be a period of increased vulnerability to rainfall for Fiji, due to a very strong La Nina event. It is also forecast to be a period of above average vulnerability to tropical cyclones. The table on the following page, provided by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, graphs the Southern Oscillation Index. La Nina events are associated with increased rainfall in Fiji. It is interesting to note that the last strong positive reading corresponds with the 2009 Fiji Floods, and the negative reading (due to El Nino) also with the low rainfall Fiji suffered in the West and the Lau group last year.



The Australian Bureau of Meteorology explains that:

During La Nina the water temperatures in the tropical eastern Pacific fall below average.In a short space of time places that previously suffered droughts receive unusually high precipitation and resulting floods…The severe floods that hit Fiji in the Western Division at the start of 2000 are an example of La Nina's impact.

UNICEF believes it to be strategically sensible to match this increase in disaster risk with a corresponding increase in disaster preparedness.

UNICEF Pacific

UNICEF is recognised worldwide as one of the leading agencies in disaster response. This was demonstrated in the Pacific region during the response to the Samoa and Tonga tsunami in October 2009, where UNICEF led or co-led three clusters – Health and Nutrition, Water & Sanitation, and Education, as well as the Protection sub-cluster of Child Protection. UNICEF has also acted as the WASH Cluster lead in recent disaster responses in Fiji, including Tropical Cyclone Tomas, Tropical Cyclone Mick, and the 2009 Fiji Floods. UNICEF continues to operate as the sole lead of the WASH Cluster and, in a demonstration to our commitment to this role, is in the process of recruiting a dedicated WASH Cluster Coordinator for the region.

With the support of AusAID through the multi-year "Strengthening Humanitarian Emergency Response Management for Children and Women in the Pacific" project, UNICEF Pacific has established warehouses with pre-positioned emergency supplies stockpiled in Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. UNICEF has responded to 10 emergencies in the Pacific Region since January 2009 (of which 3 were in Fiji) and in 8 of these emergencies pre-positioned supplies were distributed as part of the response.

UNICEF Pacific has an Emergency Focal Point and temporary Emergencies Coordinator, both based in Suva, and is currently recruiting a full time Emergencies Specialist to be based in Suva starting April 2011. The UNICEF Pacific Logistics Specialist, also based in Suva, oversees all emergency pre-positioned supplies in the three Pacific countries listed.

In the event of an emergency in the Pacific Region, the UNICEF Pacific Emergency Response Team (PERT) is mobilised. The team is comprised of UNICEF Pacific staff based in the four key countries of Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The UNICEF Pacific WASH specialist is a member of the PERT team. UNICEF continues to invest in training and mentoring members of its PERT team.

The above investments are targeted to ensure that UNICEF has both the infrastructure and human resources to act as an effective custodian of resources allocated to disaster preparedness and response in Fiji.

Request

UNICEF requests that AusAID support the boosting of key pre-positioned WASH items to the value of $FJ 40,000 ($US 22,000) to ensure adequate preparedness for the potentially increased humanitarian need over the second half of the 2010/11 cyclone season.

UNICEF intends to allocate the support to purchase sufficient materials to assemble 2,611 WASH Kits as follows:

Item	**Units**	**Unit Cost**	**Total**
Water purification tablets	7,833 pkts	$0.57	$US 4,464.81
Water containers	5,222	$1.80	$US 9,399.60
Soap	5,222	$0.60	$US 3,133.20
Freight			$US 5,000.00
Total			**$US 21,997.61**