



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

# DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for  
International  
Development

Washington D.C.  
20523

## FIJI - Cyclone

Date: March 1983 (FY 83)

Cyclone Oscar - March 1-2, 1983  
Cyclone Sarah - March 25-27, 1983

Location: Cyclone Oscar - Islands of Kadavu, Western Viti Levu especially towns of Nadi, Lautoka, Singatoka, and Nadroga; Yasawa; Naviti; Ono; Vatulele; and Beqa

Cyclone Sarah - Islands of Cikobia; Northern Vanua Levu; Vunicoqi; Qamea; Nagelelevu; Kia; Ono-i-Lau; and Votua

No. Dead: Nine

No. Affected: Cyclone Oscar - 200,000  
Cyclone Sarah - 11,132

Damage: Cyclone Oscar - Widespread damage and destruction to crops and livestock, communications systems, water and sanitation systems, roads, houses, churches, schools, hotels, and other public buildings occurred throughout the Western, Central, and Eastern divisions. Total damage was estimated at between \$50 and \$80 million.

Cyclone Sarah - Heavy damage to trees, root crops, houses, and schools from Vanua Levu southwards to Ono-i-Lau occurred.

### The Disaster

With winds as high as 185 km per hour at its center, Cyclone Oscar slammed into the Fijian island group on March 1-2, 1983. The winds and flooding due to heavy rainfall and storm surge caused widespread devastation in the west and south of Viti Levu and the nearby islands of Yasawa, Naviti, Ono, Vatulele, and Beqa. Nine people were killed, hundreds were injured, and up to 50,000 people were left homeless in what was described as the worst natural disaster to hit Fiji since a 1931 cyclone.

Cyclone Oscar caused widespread destruction of crops and livestock, particularly fruit orchards and pine plantations. Damage was heavy to communications systems, water and sanitation systems, electrical systems, and road networks. A total of 301 classrooms, 177 school roofs, 241 teachers' quarters, and six school dormitories were destroyed nationwide. Most affected was the Western Division, where 4,257 houses were damaged and 3,903 destroyed. In the Central Division, 269 houses were damaged and 467 destroyed; 283 houses were destroyed in the Eastern Division. Repair/replacement costs for various sectors were estimated as follows: food - \$3.6 million, housing - \$16 million, schools - \$3.6 million, pine plantations - \$6.2 million, posts and telecommunications - \$0.38 million, roads and water supply - \$0.73 million, electricity - \$2.33 million, drainage and irrigation - \$0.8 million, and crop rehabilitation - \$0.11 million. Damage to businesses, hotels, ships and private yachts, and tourist facilities was estimated at \$15 to \$30 million. The Government of Fiji estimated total Cyclone Oscar damage at between \$50 and \$80 million.

On March 25, 1983, a second major storm approached the Fijian island group. Cyclone Sarah crashed into the island of Vanua Levu, passing southwards to Ono-i-Lau. Wind speeds matched those of Cyclone Oscar and rainfall was again torrential. Although no deaths or major injuries were reported, damage to crops and buildings in the affected regions was heavy. Most seriously affected was Ono-i-Lau, where 140 homes and most kitchen buildings were destroyed and 14 classrooms and 11 teachers' quarters were damaged or destroyed. The Government of Fiji estimated repair/replacement costs as follows: food - \$442,000; housing - \$295,000, and schools - \$114,000.

#### Action Taken by the Government of Fiji (GOF) and Local Voluntary Agencies

Immediately after Cyclone Oscar swept through areas of the Fijian islands on March 1, the GOF declared a national disaster and requested assistance from the international community. Mobilization of GOF civil servants, the Royal Fiji Military Forces, and local and international relief teams began immediately under the direction of the Emergency Services Committee (EMSEC), Fiji's disaster relief organization. EMSEC worked alongside the Prime Minister's Hurricane Relief and Rehabilitation Committee, which is responsible for long term relief and rehabilitation needs. Prime Minister Ratu Mara took an active role in organizing relief efforts as well as conducting numerous site surveys to affected areas.

EMSEC held its first meeting on March 1, and the operations room at GOF headquarters in Suva was staffed on a 24-hour basis during the early days of the crisis. As district and divisional damage assessment reports began to arrive, EMSEC collated the information for general distribution and publication. EMSEC also arranged a series of site visits to affected areas for members of Parliament and members of the diplomatic corps.

Efforts to clean up major centers such as Nadi, Lautoka, Sigatoka, and Suva began shortly after the cyclone passed. The Sigatoka Town Council initiated a spraying campaign to destroy mosquitoes and counter an outbreak of disease.

Following extensive aerial and ground surveys of the areas damaged by Cyclone Sarah on March 25, EMSEC declared a second disaster emergency. Relief efforts were expanded to assist the islands affected by the second storm.

Local voluntary organizations carried out relief efforts under the informal leadership of the Fiji Red Cross (FRC). The FRC, operational in Lautoka, Sigatoka, and Central Division areas, provided blankets and clothing for 3,000 victims and food for 8,000, in conjunction with the Seventh-day Adventists. Cooking and household utensils were also provided to the most affected families. The FRC also issued a local appeal for cash (\$2,075 was received) and clothing, and asked the League of Red Cross Societies for FJ \$60,000 (\$62,262) to purchase and transport relief supplies. Additionally, the FRC announced plans to distribute soap and first aid kits to schools as part of an anticipated six-month rehabilitation effort.

The Fiji Council of Churches (FCC) set up a six-month program to include local acquisition and distribution of food, seeds, cooking utensils, carpentry tools, construction materials, and educational supplies. Transportation was to be provided by the Salvation Army and distribution by the GOF district superintendents in cooperation with parish ministers. The FCC appealed to the World Council of Churches for FJ \$75,000 (\$77,882) to finance the program. The Salvation Army was also mobilized to provide emergency food and clothing.

The Fiji Council of Social Services, an organization composed of groups such as the FRC, the Salvation Army, and YMCA, was very active in the relief effort.

Other local groups providing assistance included:

- Fiji Kusan Sangh - \$5,188
- Gujarat Samaj - \$20,760
- Lioness Club of Fiji - \$1,038
- Methodist Church of Fiji - \$1,038
- Fiji Sixes - \$25,950
- Fiji Bank Association - \$12,500
- Shell Oil - \$5,190
- Other individuals and businesses - \$33,216 in cash plus donations of flour, rice, timber, roofing iron, and clothing.



## Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On March 2, 1983, Ambassador Fred J. Eckert declared that the situation resulting from Cyclone Oscar warranted U.S. Government assistance. The Ambassador exercised his disaster assistance authority and \$25,000 was donated to the Fiji Disaster Relief Fund.

Once the storm had passed, the GOF made several aerial surveys to assess the damage to the islands. As a result of the surveys, a list of needs was established and an appeal made to the international community. Responding to these specific requests, A.I.D.'s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) approved an increase in the Ambassador's authority to provide for the local purchase of ten tons of rice and one ton of wheat flour. Additionally, OFDA authorized four airlifts of 2,000 tents and tent flies, 1,480 five-gallon collapsible plastic water containers, seven water trailers, and 244 rolls of plastic sheeting from the Guam and Singapore stockpiles.

Damage to the Fijian communications system posed major problems following the disaster. A Department of Defense communications survey team was sent to evaluate the extent of damage to this network and make recommendations for intermediate and long-term repair. The team brought satellite communications terminals to meet emergency needs.

Crew members from the U.S.S. Samuel Gompers helped repair three schools and reinstate technical facilities in the Western Division. A medical team from the ship provided care on Malolo Island and a number of the more serious cases were treated on board. Peace Corps volunteers also participated in the relief efforts by demonstrating and assisting in the erection of USG-provided tents.

On April 8, 1983, Ambassador Eckert determined that further USG assistance was warranted as a result of Cyclone Sarah and the sum of \$25,000 was donated to the Fiji Disaster Relief Fund.

The USG also provided several grants to both voluntary organizations and the GOF. OFDA provided \$52,780 to the Salvation Army World Service Organization for a housing repair program on Viti Levu. The Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific received a grant of \$125,476 from the USAID Mission in Suva for a Small Projects Assistance/Disaster Program to assist in the rehabilitation of kitchens, water supply systems, and vegetable crops in Fiji. An Accelerated Impact Program grant of \$10,000 was made by USAID/Suva to the GOF Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to provide seeds, cuttings, and fertilizer for immediate use following Cyclone

Oscar. An additional \$27,160 in grants was provided under the Accelerated Impact Program following Cyclone Sarah, again to purchase planting materials and fertilizer for a quick cash crop. An ongoing grant provided by USAID/Suva to the Fiji Council of Social Services was increased by \$61,600 to provide post-Oscar assistance.

Summary of USG Assistance

Ambassador's authority donated to the Fiji Disaster Relief Fund - Cyclone Oscar.....	\$25,000
Ambassador's donation for local purchase of food.....	\$5,506
Department of Defense communications support team and equipment.....	\$125,000
Tents, tent flies, water containers, water trailers, and plastic sheeting, including transportation and replacement....	\$1,324,224
Grant to the Salvation Army World Service Organization.....	\$52,780
Ambassador's authority donated to the Fiji Disaster Relief Fund - Cyclone Sarah.....	\$25,000
Total International Disaster Assistance Funds.....	\$1,557,510
Grant to the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific from USAID/Suva.....	\$125,476
Grants to GOF Agriculture Department from USAID/Suva.....	\$37,160
Increase in ongoing grant program with the Fiji Council of Social Services from USAID/Suva.....	\$61,600
Total USG Assistance	\$1,781,746

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

American National Red Cross - contributed \$5,000 in cash.

Asia Foundation - provided 4,000 school books for the Nadi Library, value not reported.

Church World Service (CWS) - gave \$23,000 in cash to the Fiji Council of Churches for the local purchase of canned fish and other food supplies through EMSEC/Fiji Red Cross (\$5,000 from the CWS Executive Director's Emergency Fund and \$18,000 collected in response to an appeal for \$25,000).

Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP) - resident nutrition team conducted a disaster survey of stricken areas. A grant was awarded by USAID/Suva for a Small Projects Assistance/Disaster Program to assist in the rehabilitation of kitchens, water supply systems, and vegetable crops in Fiji.

Salvation Army World Service Organization - received a grant of \$52,780 from OFDA to provide building materials, tools and equipment, technical assistance, and logistical support to assist reconstruction work in the Western Division.

Seventh-day Adventist World Service - contributed 40 tents valued at \$4,000, and \$5,830 in cash.

TOTAL \$37,830

Assistance Provided by the International Community

International Organizations

European Economic Community - contributed \$480,000 in cash for the local purchase of food, building materials, and agricultural materials and \$2,708,265 in cash for local purchase of food.

Food and Agriculture Organization - gave \$200,000 for emergency fish production, \$100,000 for pine tree rehabilitation, and \$20,000 for crop rehabilitation in Sigatoka Valley and the islands of Kadavu, Vatulele, and Beqa.

League of Red Cross Societies (LORCS) - advanced \$30,000 in cash to the Fiji Red Cross in response to an FRC appeal for \$62,262.

South Pacific Economic Commission - contributed \$15,565 in cash.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) - provided \$200,000 for irrigation and drainage rehabilitation projects.

UNDRO - gave \$10,000 for crop rehabilitation; UNDRO representative (UNDP Resident Representative in Suva) assisted in relief operations.

UNICEF - contributed \$60,000 for the repair of water and sanitation facilities in 50 schools.

World Council of Churches - issued an international appeal for relief aid and a second appeal for \$75,000 to fund the Fiji Council of Churches rehabilitation/reconstruction program.

World Food Program - provided 18 tons of skimmed milk.

### Governments

Australia - provided 2,000 tents and tent flies, 300 inflatable water storage tanks, an unspecified quantity of medicines, vitamin tablets, vitamin biscuits, and agricultural tools, and cash grants to two voluntary organizations. Total value of the contribution was estimated at \$481,700, including transportation.

Canada - contributed \$40,650 in cash for local purchases.

China (Peoples Republic of) - gave \$10,000 in cash.

Germany, Federal Republic of - provided \$33,350 in cash.

India - provided \$52,700 for medical supplies.

Japan - contributed \$70,000 in cash grants; provided medicines valued at \$42,190.

Korea, Republic of - gave \$10,550 in cash and transformers valued at \$105,500.

Malaysia - contributed \$10,550 in cash for foodstuffs and building materials.

Nauru - gave \$15,800 in cash.

New Zealand - provided two helicopters for damage assessment and relief work, one Orion reconnaissance plane for an assessment mission, and \$12,973 in cash; and allocated \$648,635 for rehabilitation.

Papua New Guinea - gave \$27,400 in cash.

Tonga - gave \$10,000 in cash.

Tuvalu - contributed \$5,000 in cash.

United Kingdom - provided a cash grant of \$76,600 for local purchase of relief supplies, and gave medicines valued at \$229,800.

Voluntary Organizations

Australian Council of Churches - gave 375 tents to EMSEC, valued at \$144,230.

Australia Red Cross - contributed \$4,808 through LORCS.

Burns Philp (Australia) - provided food, clothing, and household equipment valued at \$42,200.

Canada Red Cross - gave \$4,065 in cash.

Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific/Australia - contributed one planeload of 125 kg of roofing nails, one chain saw, two chests of clothing, and one kg of vegetable seeds; partially valued at \$1,250.

Japan Red Cross - gave \$12,500 in cash.

Nestle/Australia - contributed 24,000 tins of condensed milk.

New Zealand Red Cross - contributed \$3,623 in cash.

New Zealand Voluntary Organizations - gave \$4,348 in cash through the Red Cross.

Oxfam/United Kingdom - provided a \$7,650 cash grant to the Salvation Army.

Seventh-day Adventist World Service (Australia) - provided 300 bales of clothing and 200 blankets.

Switzerland Red Cross - provided \$9,622 in cash.

World Vision/Australia - contributed \$17,000 in cash for the local purchase of emergency relief items.

TOTAL \$5,958,524