



FIJI METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE

PRIVATE MAIL BAG (NAP 0351)
NADI AIRPORT, FIJI

Telephone: 679 - 6724888

Facsimile : 679 - 6720430 (HQ), 6720190 (NWFC),
6720645 (TCWC), 6736047 (Climate)

E-mail : fms@met.gov.fj

Web Site : www.met.gov.fj

File: 03/1

Date: 30 April 2012

The Secretary General
World Meteorological Organization
Case postale No. 2300
CH-1211 GENEVA 2
Switzerland

RE: REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Dear Sir

The western half of Viti Levu, on the largest island of Fiji, was severely devastated by two flooding incidents this year. The first occurred between the 23rd and 26th of January, while the second, on 30th March. In both incidents, the devastation was severe, on our people, communities, livelihoods, infrastructure, utilities and the environment. Though yet to be officially approved, it is highly likely that the final combined damage bill (for both flood events), may rise well above FJD\$100 million.

These flooding events exposed some major gaps in Fiji's flood early warning system. When I say this, it must be appreciated that this early warning system has not undergone any major developments or upgrades all these years. The responsible authority, mandated by the Fiji Government, the Hydrology Division, has never really been empowered to effectively perform this function, or develop it further, to meet the needs and demands of the country.

For instance, only three rivers in Fiji have telemetered rain and river gauges in their catchments; these being Rewa, Navua and Nadi. Nadi catchment is the only one in the Western Division that has rain and river gauges; these were installed in 2010 and 2011. Rewa and Navua are in the eastern parts of Viti Levu. The other Western Division rivers Sigatoka, Ba and Rakiraki are yet to be equipped with appropriate instruments to facilitate flood early warning system. This is also true for the Labasa river, in Vanua Levu, the second largest island of Fiji,

Additionally, the Hydrology Division is still part of the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), a recently corporatized entity. Fiji's hydrological services needs have been seriously undermined by WAF, so much so, that it has not secured professional Hydrologists to manage this Division and uphold its mandate. At this stage, the Hydrology unit is left to fend for themselves without real support from WAF.

Because of this and the gaps identified during the recent floods, our Ministry has made submissions to Government (Cabinet) for the transfer of the flood forecasting and warning.

mandate for Fiji, from Hydrology, to the Fiji Meteorological Services (FMS). In so doing, it is highly likely that the Hydrology Unit will also be transferred to FMS.

For this to be effective, FMS will urgently need a feasibility and/or needs analysis/study to identify the best way forward for hydrological services in Fiji. At the same time FMS urgently requires telemetered rain and river level gauges, as well as proper equipment for river flow measurements, for all our river catchments still without these systems. To handle and manage these systems, Fiji needs fellowships/scholarships for potential hydrologists to undertake proper training in approved institutions, not only for flood forecasting and warning, but modeling, including risk/hazard mapping capabilities, as well.

There is also a huge need for technical officers at Hydrology to undertake further training on all aspects of flood monitoring, river flow measurements and data analysis. While FMS's current communications and computing infrastructure can only accommodate some of the hydrological services needs, it therefore highly critical that a thorough study on ICT needs is done as soon as practicable.

Furthermore, Fiji strongly recommends that WMO pursue KOICA and help adapt the project for the Coastal Inundation Forecasting Demonstration Project under their East Asia Climate Change window to Fiji. It is not only sea-induced but fresh water-, as well.

The above list of requirements is certainly not exhaustive. With the learned advice and timely support of WMO and its Development Partners, I believe Fiji will be in a better position to effectively deliver early flood warnings to all its communities in the not too distant future.

Accept, sir, my highest regard.

Yours sincerely



(Alipate Waqaicelua)

Director of FMS and Permanent Representative of Fiji with WMO