



Pacific Islands (CYCLONE GITA)

Humanitarian Situation Report #1

unicef 

13 FEBRUARY 2018

Highlights

- Severe Tropical Cyclone (TC) Gita hit Tonga on the night of 12 February as a Category 4 system, and is the strongest storm Tonga has ever been struck by.
- In Tonga, emergency authorities estimate approximately 70 per cent of the population have been impacted.
- UNICEF-led Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) clusters have been convened in Suva and UNICEF has, together with other PHT partners, produced an inventory of supplies and personnel available for use in the response to TC Gita.
- UNICEF is ready to support the Governments of Tonga and Samoa in responding to the emergencies caused by TC Gita, as well as the Government of Fiji as they brace for the impact of the cyclone.

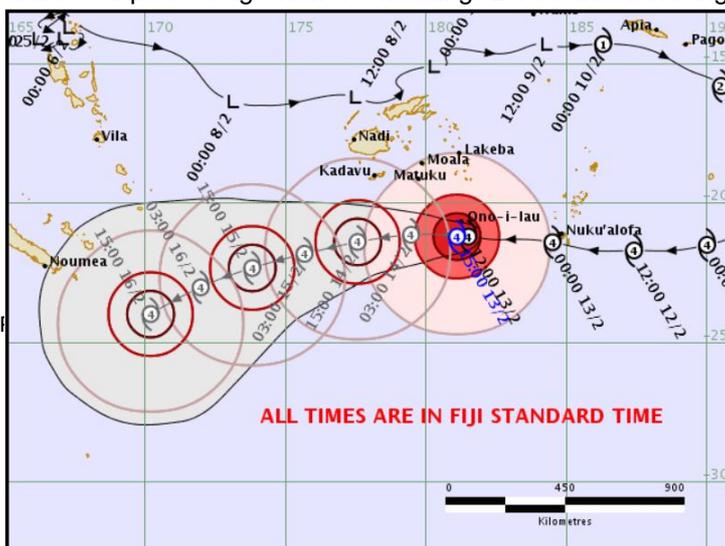
Situation overview and humanitarian needs

On 10 February, Tropical depression TD07F was named Tropical Cyclone Gita.

Samoa: Tropical Cyclone Gita passed just south of Samoa as a Category 1 cyclone on the evening of 10 February. TC Gita brought wind strengths of 39-45 miles per hour, with gust of up to 72 miles per hour, and an estimated rainfall of 300ml. The heavy rainfall led to severe flooding across the country, with low lying coastal areas and areas adjacent to water sources experiencing the worst flooding. Landslides were triggered in some locations, notably affecting parts of the main

road connecting the capital, Apia, with the eastern parts of Upolu Island.

There have been no reports of any casualties in Samoa. Widespread damage to infrastructure has left many people without basic services such as power and water, with these services disconnected for many parts of the country. Damage was recorded to the roofing of some residential properties, and several banana and breadfruit crops were uprooted nationwide. Flooding and landslides have affected road infrastructure and transportation links, with inter-island ferry and air links also disrupted. No health facilities have been reported damaged, although there are concerns of health risks related to contaminated flood water. As of 12 February there had not been any reports of damage caused to education facilities; with schools currently closed until 14 February.



Projected Cyclone Path, Source: Fiji Meteorological Services

The National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) in Samoa has been coordinating the response. An initial damage assessment was conducted on 11 February. In advance of the cyclone, evacuation centres were established at the National University of Samoa and the Seventh Day Adventist's compound at Lalovaea. People also sought refuge in private homes and church halls. As of Monday, 13 February, there were still 46 displaced people (a third of which are children) located at the Adventist Development and Relief Agency site being provided with shelter, food and water. All ports and vessels resumed operations on the morning of 12 February, with

most international flights in operation as of the afternoon of 11 February. Power and water are being restored across the country with many areas of Upolu and Savaii islands reconnected over 10-11 February.

Niue: Whilst initially expected to be directly in the path of TC Gita, the cyclone tracked east of Niue as it was upgraded to a Category 3 system. Strong winds affected the country but according to the media there were no reports of injury or of any damage.

Tonga: On Monday night, 12 February (local time), the eye of Gita passed just south of the low-lying Tongatapu islands group in southern Tonga where the country's most populous island, Tongatapu Island, and the capital city Nuku'alofa are located. This is the strongest recorded storm to have struck the island nation in its history. There are reports of one fatality with some people reportedly sustaining injuries. Emergency authorities estimate approximately 70 per cent of the population has been impacted.

The National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) is coordinating the response and initial damage assessments are ongoing. 41 evacuation centres were established with 3,035 evacuees. Electricity is reportedly down leaving people without power. Surface flooding is expected to reduce over the coming days. Hospitals are reportedly operational using generators, although there are concerns that contaminated flood water may spread disease. No schools have reported any damage as of 13 February. Damage has been reported to root crops and fruit trees. Both telecommunication providers were still operating in all of Tongatapu, Ha'apai and 'Eua, albeit with intermittent coverage.

Fiji: TC Gita passed into Fiji waters on Tuesday, 13 February and was expected to affect some 5,000 people in the southern Lau group of islands and some 10,000 people in the Kadavu and the Lomaiviti groups as a Category 4 cyclone. It is expected to continue moving west over waters south of the main island, Viti Levu, during the next 24 hours. The highest point of some of these islands is just ten metres above sea level, with storm surges reportedly already recorded at five metres.

A hurricane warning was in force for Ono-i-Lau and Vatoa, whilst a storm warning remains in force for the rest of southern Lau group. The rest of Fiji is covered by either a gale warning or a strong wind warning. Heavy rain, strong winds and heavy swells are expected to particularly affect the southernmost islands of Fiji.

UNICEF Response

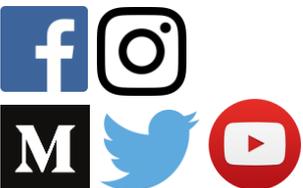
UNICEF is ready to support the Governments of Samoa and Tonga in responding to the emergencies caused by Tropical Cyclone Gita, as well as the Government of Fiji as they brace for the impact of the cyclone. UNICEF is preparing to support the governments' response, to ensure urgent life-saving support is provided, including access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene for those families affected.

In Tonga, UNICEF is working closely with the National Emergency Office, and the UN Coordination office, to coordinate activities and respond as required. Emergency supplies including portable water field test kits, to check for safety of drinking water; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Kits, which include purification tablets; water containers and hygiene products such as soap and menstrual hygiene products; inter-agency emergency health kits that include medicines, micronutrient powders, Vitamin A capsules; and tents, are being prepared for shipment to Tonga.

In Samoa, basic emergency supplies are already prepositioned and have been offered to the Samoan government if required to support the needs of affected children and families. Supplies are also prepositioned in Fiji for use in affected areas. The National Disaster Management Office in Fiji have been offered the use of RapidPro – an open-source platform of applications that can help the government deliver information quickly and connect communities to lifesaving services through the short message service (SMS) for mobile phones.

UNICEF-led Pacific Humanitarian Team clusters have been convened in Suva. UNICEF, together with other PHT partners, has produced an inventory of supplies and personnel available for use in the response. This has been compiled and shared with the governments of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

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Website: www.unicef.org/pacificislands

UNICEF Spokespersons

Sheldon Yett
Representative
 UNICEF Pacific
 Email: syett@unicef.org
 Tel: +679 3300 439

Cate Heinrich
Chief of Communication
 UNICEF Pacific
 Email: cheinrich@unicef.org
 Tel: +679 992 5606