

Policy pointers

Research from Fiji shows that governance and institutional arrangements for humanitarian response and long-term development need to be reformed, to break down silos and meet global and local calls for a humanitarian-development nexus.

Clusters that operate during peace time (supporting long-term development, disaster preparedness and mitigation) and are also operational for humanitarian response provide an important pathway to strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus.

A localised response, which recognises local stakeholders (government, civil society, community) who work across the continuum of development, humanitarian response and recovery, provides a key foundation for the humanitarian-development nexus.

A strong development agenda should provide an enabling environment for humanitarian response and mid-term recovery, to feed back into, and in turn support, longer-term development.

Humanitarian response for development: lessons from Tropical Cyclone Winston

Linking humanitarian response and development is an important agenda, with multiple drivers across both sectors' landscapes. It is also a topical issue in Fiji, a country vulnerable to natural hazards. Our research aimed to learn from Fiji's experience of response and recovery after Tropical Cyclone Winston hit in 2016; we found that the humanitarian response to the cyclone had no substantive influence on the longer-term governance and institutional arrangements for development. However, the study did reveal cross-sector aspirations and practical actions to strengthen the connections between humanitarian work and development (the 'humanitarian-development nexus'). This research offers lessons for the sub-national and national governments of Fiji, as well as other governments and donors in the Pacific region and beyond, on how humanitarian response and early recovery can be strengthened to contribute to development goals.

Tropical Cyclone Winston was one of the most powerful cyclones ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere. Making landfall on Fiji in 2016 as a Category 5 storm (the highest possible intensity rating), Tropical Cyclone Winston affected 62% of the country's total population. It was the highest-cost cyclone ever to hit the South Pacific region (Figure 1), costing Fiji approximately US\$500 million or 10% of the country's gross domestic product.¹

This briefing reports key findings from research undertaken in 2017 with government officials, representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) and community leaders in Fiji's Western Division (see Figure 2). The study used interviews, a multistakeholder workshop and a supplementary document review to explore whether the humanitarian response to Tropical

Cyclone Winston interacted with longer-term development goals and structures. It also looked for potential synergies and opportunities to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian response and development goals in the future.

Three specific questions guided the research:

1. How did the humanitarian response to Tropical Cyclone Winston influence the longer-term governance and institutional arrangements for development?
2. What implications did the humanitarian response have for longer-term development outcomes (including education, housing, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, roads and food security)?
3. What opportunities do humanitarian responses offer for strengthening longer-term governance and institutional arrangements for development?

The beginnings of a humanitarian-development nexus are already present

Urban enquiries, rural responses

Within the research, we set out to understand how the humanitarian response to Tropical Cyclone Winston in urban areas impacted the development agenda.

These communities, which include many people living in informal settlements, can be particularly vulnerable to disasters because

the shift from rural to urban settings can disrupt cultural practices that might traditionally have provided support following a disaster. However, while our research questions sought to focus on urban dimensions, the interview responses and also the documentation we gathered tended to address rural situations. It seemed that the focus on disaster response was stronger for rural areas and that urban humanitarian responses were not well integrated within the broader humanitarian response.

This may be indicative of how policies for addressing urban issues lag behind those for rural development in the broader Pacific region. Nevertheless, the study's findings remain highly relevant to urban situations where governance structures are responsible for both a long-term development agenda and humanitarian response.

A disjointed approach

The research found no evidence that the humanitarian response to Tropical Cyclone Winston had substantive influence over the development sector's longer-term governance and institutional arrangements.

There seem to be several reasons for this:

- In general, Fiji has fragmented and separated governance structures for rural and urban development²
- Similarly, humanitarian response and development planning in the Western Division have separate and distinct governance and institutional arrangements^{3,4}
- Interviewees reported stronger coordination between government and CSOs during humanitarian efforts than they had experienced during development planning, either before or after Tropical Cyclone Winston
- Indeed, although the government developed a recovery framework for Fiji after Tropical Cyclone Winston,¹ there have been no clear strategies to dovetail this framework into the humanitarian efforts or plans for longer-term development
- Those leading the humanitarian efforts were not familiar with local-level planning agendas, which meant their actions could not easily feed into development priorities or longer-term governance and institutional arrangements.

Development in silo

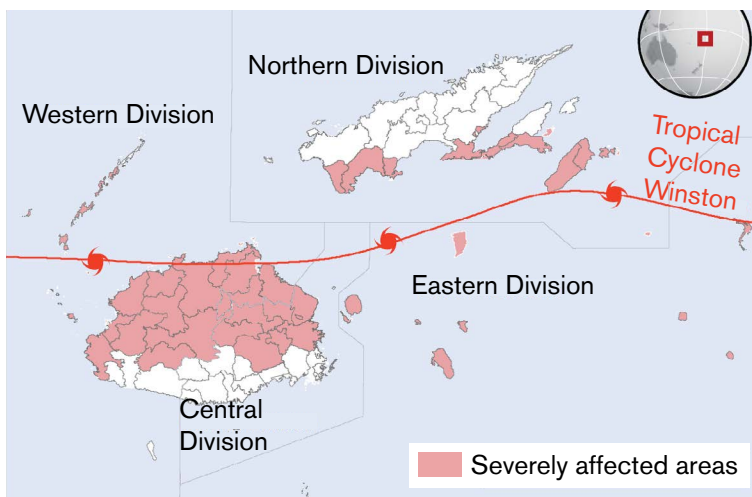
In fact, the humanitarian response to Tropical Cyclone Winston and subsequent recovery interventions appeared to be siloed from the longer-term development agenda. Given the magnitude of the disaster and resulting damage, it is understandable that response efforts focused on rebuilding and reinstating infrastructure, rather than on long-term development priorities.

But our research did reveal aspirations for stronger links between development planning and humanitarian response, and for the longer-term development agenda to employ governance and institutional arrangements practiced within the humanitarian response. Encouragingly, this ambition was common to stakeholders representing CSOs, communities, and national and local government. Certainly, there is a wealth of opportunities for more effective integration.

Opportunities for integration

1. Apply the coordination seen in the humanitarian response to Tropical Cyclone Winston to the longer-term development agenda. Our research found that Western Division government officials and civil society representatives preferred the governance and institutional arrangements they worked within during the humanitarian response to those in place for long-term development. One workshop participant said:

Figure 1. Tropical Cyclone Winston tracks across Fiji



Source: UNOCHA (2016)⁵

"In 'peace times' we have our own sector plans. We have head of department meetings but we don't have a combined plan. It would be good to have one."

2. Strengthen Fiji's emerging 'cluster system' to provide governance and institutional arrangements that link humanitarian responses and the development agenda.

Fiji is developing a national 'cluster system' within its National Humanitarian Policy. Clusters are an inter-agency committee of humanitarian organisations including government, UN agencies and CSOs to enable coordination of humanitarian response. They are usually formed around specific sectors such as health; water, sanitation and hygiene; education; and shelter and protection.

The policy, however, only provides overarching priorities and themes and gives no guidance on sub-national arrangements. We recommend that the final policy provides guidance for forming and maintaining sub-national 'evergreen clusters': clusters that remain active whether or not there is a humanitarian response.

Such a decentralised cluster system could acknowledge sub-national development priorities within its preparedness and mitigation activities, and ensure these same priorities flow through into humanitarian response and recovery. Decentralised clusters could be led by senior sub-national government officials with responsibility for both development and humanitarian response, and could develop standard operating procedures that support better integration.

Our research found stakeholders at both national and sub-national levels expressed strong endorsement for 'evergreen clusters' that reach down to divisional level while also connecting to the national level. However, interviewees also recognised the challenges Fiji's geography poses. One stakeholder, a national-level government official, commented:

"We can't make it totally simple, but this needs addressing in the policy. There needs to be clear lines of who reports to who. I haven't heard much about the cluster system at the local level. Fiji is a small country but when it's far away and access is an issue — we need coordination between the different levels."

3. Decentralise and integrate 'recovery'.

Decentralised recovery actions, integrated with 'evergreen clusters' coordinating humanitarian and development work, could together create a nexus of planning and action that helps build stronger and more resilient communities. As one international stakeholder put it:

Figure 2. Fiji political boundaries



Source: based on map from www.netmaps.net

"Recovery [after Tropical Cyclone Winston] could have been decentralised [to the divisional level]: they are the right people to know what needs to be done. They are the right people for accountability. Then they can report back to the national level — recovery would have happened quicker."

Local-level stakeholders also championed stronger coordination during the recovery process. One CSO representative from the Western Division said:

"We need to work more together. To not only link at time of the disaster but also after disaster and link together. It's better to have us meet monthly and quarterly."

Sub-national level budget allocations for recovery could be an effective part of decentralisation. By putting sub-national government in the driving seat, stronger links are built between disaster risk reduction and mitigation, humanitarian response in times of crisis, and the ongoing longer-term development agenda. Local staff are more likely to see the connections between these phases, and also to prioritise efforts for disaster risk reduction and mitigation strategies. Local divisional staff are already working to support risk reduction and this could be championed again as part of response and recovery work.

4. Build on existing governance structures at both divisional and community level.

At divisional and community level, the same government staff and community leaders are responsible for both the development agenda and humanitarian responses. So the beginnings of a humanitarian-development nexus are already present. Building upwards from this will help strengthen the links and take advantage of

government expertise where the ideas of 'risk integration in development planning' and 'build back better' are already embedded (concepts that are strongly valued by local stakeholders). During the research workshop, one CSO representative commented:

"From my perspective working in an NGO, there is so much to learn from here. We are implementing projects in 30 communities. What I've learnt from that project — people lack the knowledge. But from today, I've learnt, you [government] are the strength here. You [government] have the structure that supports resilience — you are here, but it has not filtered down to the community."

5. Focus on applying key concepts that strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus. Concepts like 'build back better' and 'risk integration' within long-term development planning that mitigates risk while building resilience are widely endorsed by government, civil society and communities. Focusing on such concepts can help anchor governance and institutional arrangements within a coordinated humanitarian-development nexus. But the 'build back better' concept needs to go beyond just infrastructure, so it also ensures that resilience is strengthened across government, civil society and community sectors.

6. Development agendas can enable the humanitarian-development nexus. The longer-term development agenda can support and create the enabling environment needed for efficient humanitarian response and mid-term recovery, which in turn can feed back into, and support, longer-term development. To practically achieve this nexus, local development plans could be made available to multiple stakeholders, including humanitarian responders, so they can be taken into account.

In summary, Fiji's Western Division already has a platform for developing a coordinated response, recovery and development nexus, and the country's development agendas can support such coordination. There is also an appetite for stronger coordination. These advantages could provide a strong catalysis for much closer and more effective working in future.

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Notes

¹ Government of Fiji (2016) Disaster recovery framework: Tropical Cyclone Winston, 20 February 2016. Ministry of Economy. / ² UN-Habitat (2012) *Fiji: Lautoka City urban profile*. <https://unhabitat.org/books/fiji-lautoka-urban-profile> / ³ Government of Fiji (1998) National Disaster Management Act. / ⁴ Rahman, MH and Singh, S (2011) Towards strong local governance: current reform scenario in Fiji. *International Journal of Public Administration* 34(10): 674–681. / ⁵ UNOCHA (2016) Severe Tropical Cyclone Winston situation report No. 19.