

HIGHLIGHTS

- El Niño alert issued, with meteorologists estimating a 70 per cent chance of event developing by late 2014.
- OCHA and the Pacific Humanitarian Team responded to five emergencies between November 2013 and May 2014.
- Recovery efforts in cyclone-affected Tonga include a cash-for-work programme focusing on food security and debris management.
- A study of the Pacific Humanitarian Team response in the Solomon Islands finds coordination support appreciated, but improved communication and assessments needed.



Credit: OCHA/E. McLeod

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El Niño alert issued

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology has issued an El Niño alert and is estimating a 70 per cent chance of an El Niño event by late 2014. Northeast trade winds and sea surface temperature anomalies have been evident since February. A large expanse of warm water is currently located along the equator and moving eastwards, with temperatures one to two degrees Celsius higher than average. Some forecasters were initially expecting the El Niño event to be similar in impact to record temperatures experienced in 1997 and 1998, but is now not expected to be as strong as first predicted.

What does this mean for the Pacific Islands?

Drought conditions may be experienced in some Pacific Island countries. In addition to rainfall distribution changes, there could be increased air temperatures due to warm ocean temperatures rising to the surface and making contact with the atmosphere.

In the period from November 2014 to April / May 2015, below average rainfall and drought conditions may be experienced in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Niue and even Tuvalu. These conditions could threaten food security and livelihoods as many island communities depend on the agricultural sector. It is also important to note that the El Niño event is expected to end just as the dry season commences, further exacerbating impacts for communities already dealing with crop and livestock losses.

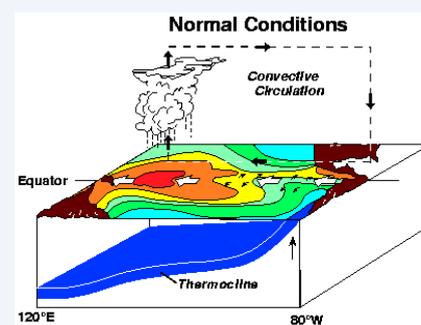
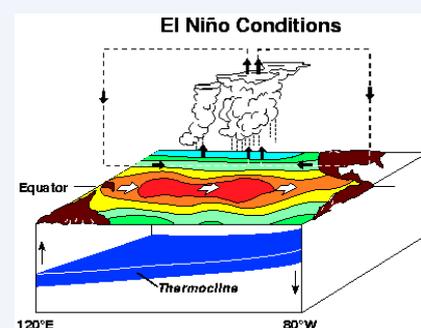
During El Niño events, Pacific cyclone seasons generally commence earlier than expected, in September / October rather than November / December. Wetter than normal conditions may be experienced in the eastern Pacific area, including Kiribati, Tokelau, French Polynesia and the northern Cook Islands.

What is El Niño?

El Niño events occur every three to seven years and refer to the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), a large-scale warming of sea-surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean and weaker than normal trade winds.

During El Niño events, east to west trade winds weaken, leading to a rise in sea surface temperatures east of Indonesia which then move eastwards along the equatorial Pacific. As a result, waters in the large central and eastern Pacific regions warm.

El Niño seasons lead to extremes in worldwide weather patterns that can last from nine to 12 months, and up to 18 months. The main impacts are temperature anomalies, changes in rainfall, cyclones, floods and droughts.



Credit: NOAA

PACIFIC CLUSTERS

Cluster Area	Lead Agency
Health and Nutrition	WHO / UNICEF
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	UNICEF
Food Security	FAO
Education in Emergencies	UNICEF / Save the Children
Protection	OHCHR / UNHCR
Emergency Shelter	IFRC
Logistics	WFP
Early Recovery	UNDP

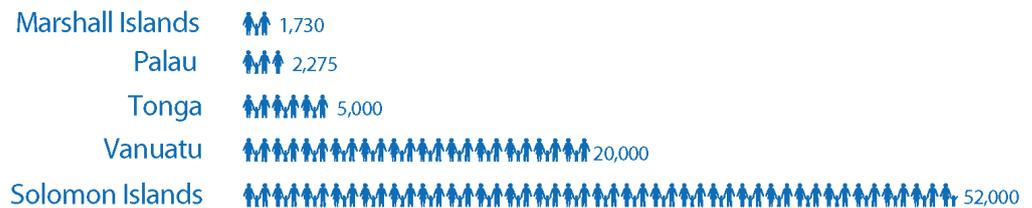
There were three cyclones and two flood events during the 2013-2014 cyclone season

Recap of the Pacific disaster season

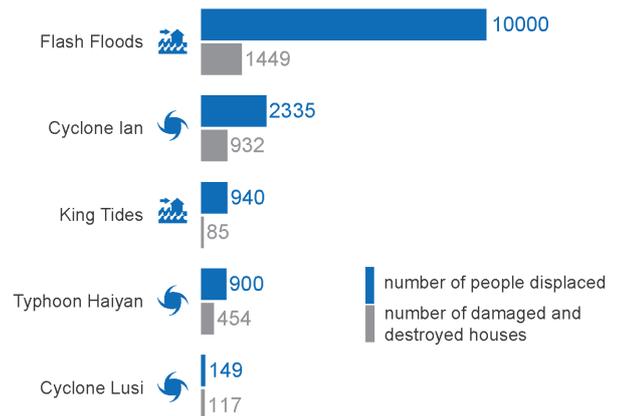
OCHA and the Pacific Humanitarian Team responded to five emergencies during the 2013-2014 cyclone season between November and April. There were three cyclones and two flood events: Super Typhoon Haiyan in Palau (November 2013), Tropical Cyclone Ian in Tonga (January 2014), King Tides in the Marshall Islands, Tropical Cyclone Lusi in Vanuatu (March 2014), and the worst event of the season, Flash Floods in the Solomon Islands (April 2014).

Across the region, a total of 33 fatalities were recorded. Most deaths occurred in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, with 22 and 10 deaths respectively. Despite Palau and Tonga being struck by Category 5 cyclones with winds over 250 kilometres per hour, both countries had relatively low death tolls, with only one reported fatality in Tonga.

Over 80,000 people were affected by the five disasters. Of the total number affected, 52,000 were in the Solomon Islands, followed by 20,000 in Vanuatu and 5,000 in Tonga.



A total of 851 houses were destroyed and 2,186 damaged. When the number of damaged and destroyed homes are combined for each country, the Solomon Islands has the highest figure with 1,149, followed by Tonga with 932. A total of 14,324 people were displaced in all emergencies. In the immediate days after the disaster, the Solomon Islands had the most displaced people, with 10,000 seeking emergency shelter and 2,335 in Tonga.



Humanitarian funding requirements during the five emergencies totalled over US\$37 million, with the largest request from Tonga (\$15.1 million) following Cyclone Ian.

Humanitarian agencies support Lusi response



Searching for survivors after a landslide caused by TC Lusi. Credit: VHT

The Vanuatu Humanitarian Team supported Government assessment and relief efforts: <http://bit.ly/1qS1uHf>



To support Government leadership, there were a total of 57 deployments during the season, with 39 Pacific Humanitarian Team members deployed to the Solomon Islands and 15 to Tonga. In addition, one OCHA staff member was deployed to each of the emergencies in Palau, Marshall Islands and Vanuatu to provide coordination and information management support following direct requests from Government.

SEASON
TIMELINE

November 2013

December 2013

January 2014

February 2014

March 2014

April 2014

7 November
Palau: ST Haiyan6 January
Tonga: TC Ian3 March
RMI: Flood10 Mar
Vanuatu: TC Lusi3 April
Solomon Islands:
Flash Floods**Palau: Super Typhoon Haiyan**

On 7 November 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan passed directly over the island of Kayangel, the northernmost state of Palau. No lives were lost despite the Category 5 system bringing sustained winds over 250 kilometres per hour and high swells. Over 900 people sought shelter in evacuation centres and, on December 8, the President declared a State of Emergency for a period of 10 days. Based on initial assessment data, 39 homes were totally destroyed, while 415 homes sustained damage across 13 states. Total humanitarian funding for the Immediate and Near Term Response Plan was US\$5.2 million. OCHA ROP deployed staff to support the coordination, initial assessment, and response planning.

Typhoon Haiyan, Palau

	2,275	affected
	900	displaced
	0	dead
	39	houses destroyed
	415	houses damaged
	\$5.2m	needed

Tonga: Tropical Cyclone Ian

Tropical Cyclone Ian tracked between Fiji and Tonga for several days before intensifying to a Category 5 system with winds over 200 kilometres per hour. In the early hours of 11 January, the cyclone swept east of the Vava'u group before passing directly over Ha'apai in the afternoon. A state of emergency was declared for Vava'u and Ha'apai the same day. There was one fatality, 14 injuries and extensive damage to houses, infrastructure and agriculture. A total of 534 houses were destroyed and 398 were damaged. Around 2,335 people sought shelter in 51 formal and informal shelters. On 21 January, the Government accepted international assistance from the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) who supported national clusters for the first time. OCHA ROP supported response planning and information management, while the PHT deployed expertise in WASH, Health, Protection, Livelihoods, Food Security and Shelter. The three-month [response plan](#) totalled US\$15.1 million.

Cyclone Ian, Tonga

	5,000	affected
	2,335	displaced
	1	dead
	534	houses destroyed
	398	houses damaged
	\$15.1m	needed

Marshall Islands: King Tides

On 3 March 2014, king tides inundated Majuro Atoll and some of the outer islands of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, including Arno Atoll, Mili Atoll and Kili Island. The inundation affected housing infrastructure and contaminated water supplies, agriculture and food crops. A State of Emergency was issued by Cabinet on 5 March. Three local administrations formally requested assistance from the National Government. OCHA, IFRC and WHO provided technical expertise and assistance, with the US and Australia providing financial support.

King Tides, Marshall Islands

	1,730	affected
	940	displaced
	0	dead
	18	houses destroyed
	67	houses damaged
	\$3.2m	needed

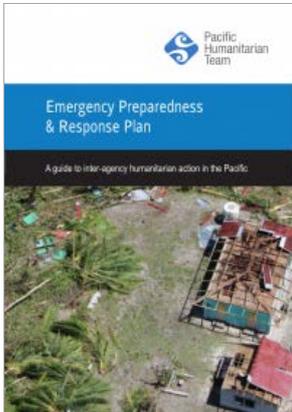
Vanuatu: Tropical Cyclone Lusi

Between 10 to 13 March, Tropical Cyclone Lusi passed over Vanuatu as a Category 2 system. There were 10 confirmed deaths, four injuries, 149 people displaced and 117 houses damaged. Food security risks for a total of 4,687 households were identified in the provinces of Penama, Malampa, Torba, Sanma and Shefa. With the support of the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team, assessments were undertaken and a Humanitarian Action Plan was developed, with a total funding requirement of US\$588,000.

Cyclone Lusi, Vanuatu

	20,000	affected
	149	displaced
	10	dead
	0	houses destroyed
	117	houses damaged
	\$0.6m	needed

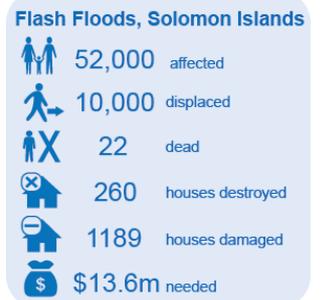
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE PLAN



In December 2013, the [Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan \(EPREP\)](#) was distributed to humanitarian actors across the region. The EPREP guides inter-agency humanitarian action in the Pacific and consolidates information on the humanitarian architecture, tools and services of the Pacific Humanitarian Team.

Solomon Islands: Flash Floods

Three days of heavy rain from Tropical Cyclone Ita caused severe flooding in the Solomon Islands in early April. There were 22 confirmed deaths and two people missing. Over 50,000 people were affected, mainly in the capital, Honiara, and other areas of Guadalcanal Province. At the peak of the crisis, approximately 10,000 people were displaced in nearly 30 evacuation centres. On 3 April, the Government declared affected areas a disaster zone and, on 5 April, requested the support of the Pacific Humanitarian Team, with over 40 personnel deployed. The UN Central Emergency Response Fund released US\$1.8 million to support life-saving health and WASH activities. The [Humanitarian Action Plan](#) funding requirement for immediate response needs was \$13.6 million.



Worst flooding in history

In April 2014, James from Koa Valley, was living in the Mbokonavera School in Honiara with his wife and two children, and over 70 members of his community, after floodwater washed away his home. The family lost everything except the clothes they wore when they fled. When asked if he wanted to rebuild in the same place next to the Mataniko River, he was adamant it was not safe to return.

“There is no need to go back because too many people died,” he said. “It is too dangerous for us to live there.”

Read more on the flash floods at <http://bit.ly/1nKh4aF>



Credit: OCHA/E. McLeod

Tonga recovering from Cyclone Ian

Six months after Tropical Cyclone Ian caused extensive damage across the islands of Ha'apai on 11 January 2014, humanitarian and development partners continue to support the recovery of the affected population. The Category 5 storm, with winds over 200 kilometres an hour, tore across the north-eastern districts of Ha'ano, Foa, Lifuka and Uiha, affecting over 5,000 people and destroying or damaging 950 homes.

Assessments found at least 90 per cent of agriculture on the islands completely damaged, with immediate rehabilitation required to ensure ongoing food security. The Ministry of Agriculture & Food, Forests and Fisheries (MAFFF) and the Food & Agriculture Organization estimated US\$20.7 million in damages and loss.

Cash-for-work scheme

In April 2014, an agreement was signed between the Government of Tonga and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to undertake recovery efforts and to strengthen preparedness for future cyclone impacts.

“After the cyclone, we noticed there were still piles of debris outside people’s homes,” said Akiko Fujii, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative. “A lot of the houses were completely ruined, with nothing left except the foundations.”

UNDP initiated a cash-for-work programme in June 2014 to support community rebuilding, such as debris clearing and crop planting. The scheme targeted between 1,000 and 1,500 affected people in the three islands of Lifuka, Foa and 'Uiha. Cash-for-work is a relatively new concept in the Pacific and was first rolled out after the Tsunami in Tonga in 2009. UNDP was able to build on the Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP), an Australian aid funded initiative already working with communities in Tonga on in food security and disaster risk reduction. PRRP provided funding for equipment and tools for the cash-for-work scheme, and for three coordinator positions and a debris management advisor.

Cyclone Ian strikes tiny Pacific nation



Ha'apai resident cleans up after Cyclone Ian struck her home.
Credit: Tonga Digicel

Cyclone Ian was the strongest storm ever recorded in Tongan waters: <http://bit.ly/1tyb7xB>

In addition to providing greater food security, the garden nurseries are also cyclone-proof to withstand future hazards

To make payments more timely and efficient, UNDP also partnered with Digicel Tonga on mobile money services. Using their mobile phones, vulnerable participants in the cash-for-work scheme could receive payments through their phones.

Strengthening food security

The smaller and more isolated islands of Lulunga District in Ha'apai and Motu District in Vava'u were also found to be affected by the cyclone and were already recovering from a six-month long drought. With the help of MORDI Tonga Trust, Rotary New Zealand and MAFFF, 17 communities – six in Lulunga and 11 in Motu – were targeted for rehabilitation. Garden nurseries were built in all communities to plant vegetables and other plants, with training provided to community members on the sowing process.



Photo: Community members preparing for the cash-for-work initiative. Credit: UNDP Tonga

“We wanted to rehabilitate the agricultural sector with vegetable nurseries and to enhance food security and livelihoods,” said Soane Patolo, Director of MORDI Tonga Trust. “The nurseries are also cyclone-proof to ensure they can withstand future hazards.”

Solomon Islands: Assessing the PHT response

In late June 2014, interviews were held with stakeholders involved with the Pacific Humanitarian Team's response to flash flooding in the Solomon Islands. In total, 28 people from 22 different organizations were interviewed about their perceptions of the PHT's coordination performance and effectiveness.

The findings revealed that coordination support from the PHT was highly appreciated by all stakeholders, however communication across clusters, and to and from the Government and affected people must be improved. For assessments, a more coordinated approach to initial joint assessments is needed using standard questionnaires, key informants, and multi-sectoral rapid assessment teams. The response planning process and the development of the Humanitarian Action Plan was well perceived and considered useful for funding applications, however there was a call for more Government involvement.

In Brief

Civil-military engagement in the Pacific

From 16 to 21 March 2014, OCHA held a UN Civil-Military Coordination course, in partnership with RedR Australia, in Nadi, Fiji. Over 20 participants from more than 10 Pacific Island countries took part.



Photo: Graduates at the civil-military coordination course in Nadi, Fiji. Credit: OCHA/Marie Mure.

Coordination support from the Pacific Humanitarian Team was highly appreciated by all stakeholders during the Solomon Islands flash flood response

TRAINING

July 2014

NDMO Emergency Shelter Cluster Coordination in Samoa. Organized by IFRC in partnership with SPC.

July 2014

WASH during Emergencies training in Suva, Fiji. Organized by the WASH Cluster.

July 2014

Severe malnutrition training, organized by the Nutrition Cluster.

Even small disasters can overwhelm small island economies

The UN Resident Coordinator and co-chair of the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT), Ms. Osnat Lubrani, shared her thoughts on disasters in the Pacific and how the PHT partnership can better support island countries.

“Not only does the PHT need to engage at the technical level within national disaster management offices and key ministries, but also at the top levels of Government to make clear how PHT support can be activated.”

Read the full interview at <http://bit.ly/1jdWu0E>



SAVE THE DATE

The 7th Pacific Humanitarian Team Regional Meeting will be held **27 to 30 October 2014** at the Holiday Inn Suva in Fiji.

Web platform launched to support Pacific humanitarian coordination

During the response to the Solomon Islands floods, a new web platform was launched to support Pacific Humanitarian Team information management and cluster coordination. To access the site, visit <https://pht.humanitarianresponse.info>



Launch of Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow

In June, OCHA launched a new policy report entitled *Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Managing the Risk of Humanitarian Crises* at the 20th Regional Disaster Managers Meeting in Suva, Fiji. The report argues that a shift towards a more preventative approach to crises is essential and that crisis risk management should be embedded in aid. Download the report at www.unocha.org/saving-lives

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