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Women's Weather Watch – Fiji: TC Ella (11th May, 2017) (/index.php/en/actions/archive/553-women- s-weather-watch-fiji-tc-ella-11th-may-2017)

Written by **Media Advocacy**

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Update collated by Sian Rolls

While TC Ella continues to sway and swerve, now swinging more North of Cikobia, damaging gale force winds are still expected to affect the country.

Speaking to femLINKpacific/FemTALK89FM earlier today Stephen Meke, Senior Forecaster at Fiji Meteorological Office, said the country should continue to prepare as strong winds and rain will affect the country as TC Ella approaches.

For the full podcast, go to: <https://soundcloud.com/femlinkpacific/womens-weather-watch-tc-ella-11th-may-pm>

Labasa town has already started to see some signs of the changing weather, says Adi Vasulevu, femLINK's convenor for Vanua Levu/ Rabi who reports the weather today was unsettled with on and off rain and winds picking up.

Fane Boseiwaqa, femLINK's convenor for Ba/Tavua/Rakiraki also reports changes in weather as well in Tavua. She described the weather as getting dark and cloudy.

What is vital she stresses is access to correct information – a challenge with TC Ella's patterns changing frequently in the last 24 hours.

Despite the challenge, Boseiwaqa outlined that women were taking to social and online media to keep a track of the cyclone developments assisted by femLINK's Women's Weather Watch update. Women from the Rural Women Leaders network are now paying more specific attention to weather updates and sharing these with their members and communities.

Disavu Daugunu, Secretary for Tawake Women's Club, was in Labasa when she got the first Women's Weather Watch alert – immediately passing it on to her family by the seaside in Tawake.

From what she's heard from her husband in Tawake, the wind is slowly picking up, the villagers are indoors and the

schools have been closed from today.

The importance of preparedness was echoed by Mereisi Mara, Treasurer for the Nasaulevu Women's Club in Nabaci, Savusavu, who said that while the weather was sunny and clear, her community continued to prepare for the worst with TC Winston's experience forever ingrained in their mind.

While sunshine is welcome, it does also create complications – communities like Nabaci do not have piped water supply, so women today have had to walk up to 5km to collect water in preparation for TC Ella.

Challenges of access to water was also a concern raised by Nila Rao, an advisory councillor in Rakiraki, who said that the women farmers in particular have experienced a dry spell which has prevented them from planting and growing crops. This means there is no surplus crops to store. According to Rao, they are simply living off of whatever they are able to grow in their backyard gardens.

Like Rao, a first-responder after TC Winston, Vasulevu is also concerned about families still recovering and is urging The Fiji Meteorological Office and National Disaster Management Officer to ensure that they are putting out clear information as soon as possible so that families are able to get to evacuation centres with time to spare if necessary.

She also called for inclusive spaces wherever evacuation centres are established as well; this includes having washroom facilities that are women and disability friendly.

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