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Women's Weather Watch – Fiji: TC Ella Afternoon Update (12th May, 2017) (/index.php/en/actions/archive/555-women- s-weather-watch-fiji-tc-ella-afternoon- update-12th-may-2017)

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Still Watching the Weather:

TC Ella as of midday is still a category 2 cyclone but is moving further away from the Fiji group.

Speaking to femLINKpacific, Stephen Meke, Senior Forecaster at Fiji Meteorological Office, said with the cyclone is taking with it associated rain bands and strong winds, meaning the country might get some occasional showers, maybe possible isolated heavy falls and thunderstorms from tonight but nothing further.

According to Meke, the TC Ella warning has also been downgraded to an alert.

The series of out-of-season cyclones including TC Ella is a sign that communities now have to be on alert and prepared at all times according to Sunia Ratulevu, Acting Director of the National Disaster Management Office, who spoke to femLINK this morning. TC Donna and Ella, he said, are examples that underscore that climate change is happening.

Adi Vasulevu, convenor for the Northern Division, described the response to out-of-season TC Ella as “a really a big question mark from the women.”

Ratulevu also noted that the NDMO is pleased with communities response to the weather alerts, adding that they were aware of some communities in the North had already evacuated in preparation. He said the resilience of the nation depended on the resilience of the communities.

Yet, while communities in the North were taking the warnings to heart, Urmila Prasad, an advisory councillor in Rakiraki, said that some still are yet to take warnings seriously.

While she noted that some members of the community were preparing their homes, others were less concerned given Rakiraki was out of the direct path of the cyclone.

Women are First Responders:

According to Vani Tuvuki, leader of the Koronubu Women's Fellowship from Ba, she hadn't hear any weather information on the radio but was informed through femLINKpacific's Women's Weather Watch; information she quickly disseminated.

Speaking to femLINK this afternoon, Tuvuki shared that the updates were not only valuable for the sugarcane farming community of Koronubu, that quickly mobilised to prepare including having the men of the community reinforce homes, but also to neighbouring and coastal communities.

She expressed thanks for receiving updates, noting additional strange weather patterns including fog in the early morning.

Further North of Viti Levu, Fane Boseiwaqa, convenor for Ba/Tavua/Rakiraki, said other women leaders like Temaleti Sauka, President of the Tikina Nailaga Soqosoqo Vakamarama, had also disseminated Women's Weather Watch updates to their communities in preparation.

Boseiwaqa further noted little change to the weather in the past week aside from rainfall this morning.

As communities breathe a sigh of relief as TC Ella distances itself from the country, Prasad highlighted that if the dry weather continues, access to water and thus agriculture and livelihoods will soon start to struggle.

For femLINK's network of Rural Women Leaders, this means amplifying the ongoing call for a gender inclusive approach to disaster preparedness, response and recovery as earlier today expressed Salome Raqiyawa from Nalalawa:

"We need gender equality in every areas of life especially in decision-making, from grassroot level to divisional and national level. Most of the time, what women see, men don't see... women do everything especially during and after natural disaster."

*Listen to the full podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/femlinkpacific/womens-weather-watch-tc-ella-12th-may-2017-pm>
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