

## Counting births and deaths in the Pacific, and assessing the impacts of tropical cyclone Winston



### Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in the Pacific Islands – standards, best practice, and lessons learnt

Registrars, statisticians and health information specialists from across the Pacific gathered in Noumea, New Caledonia (in February 22–25), to share experiences and lessons on improving civil registration and vital statistics systems and data.

This was the first meeting of its kind within the region to bring all three major sectors together, and built on the experiences of the first five years of the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan.

Civil registration (the routine recording of births, marriages and deaths) is essential to provide timely data for development, and to plan services such as schools and infrastructure, support human and child rights and promote good governance and accountability.

Vital statistics and cause of death data collected through a routine registration system are also essential for effectively identifying and responding to key health issues in the Pacific region, such as non-communicable diseases.

The meeting on 'CRVS in the Pacific Islands – Standards, best practice and lessons learnt', was organised by the Brisbane Accord Group, which includes the Pacific Community (SPC), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); along with the United Nations Statistics Division.

Hosted by SPC, the meeting drew on expertise from nine technical agencies and regional networks, with 21 Pacific Island countries and territories participating (Marshall Islands was unable to attend due to flight disruptions).

Since implementation of the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan began in 2011, there has been significant progress, with countries such as Nauru, American Samoa and Cook Islands recently releasing detailed analysis reports; new computerised systems have been introduced in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands; and birth registration completeness significantly increasing in some countries, including Kiribati, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

This progress has been complemented by strong political commitment in the region to improving CRVS through both Ministers of Health meetings,



CRVS in the Pacific Islands Meeting participants

and more recently the adoption of the Asia Pacific Regional Action Framework for Improving CRVS and the Asia-Pacific CRVS Decade (2015–2024).

‘Despite the progress to date, more needs to be done to ensure that everyone is included ‘in the picture’ of our region,’ the Pacific Community’s Deputy Director-General, Cameron Diver, said when addressing the meeting at SPC headquarters.

‘This meeting is an opportunity for island states to join together to build on the commitments made to improving CRVS in the region and to share knowledge and experiences on how to do this,’ he said.

For more information on the workshop proceedings or the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan, please visit: [www.pacific-crvs.org](http://www.pacific-crvs.org); for more information on the UN Decade for CRVS or Asia Pacific Regional Action Framework please visit [www.getinthepicture.org](http://www.getinthepicture.org).

## Background

The Brisbane Accord Group, which was established in 2010, includes 12 partner agencies and regional networks: SPC, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, Australian Bureau of Statistics, ESCAP, Pacific Health Information Network, Pacific Civil Registrars Network, Queensland University of Technology, University of Queensland, University of New South Wales, and Fiji National University. SPC acts as coordinator and secretariat for the group, with work coordinated under the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy through the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan.

## Useful links:

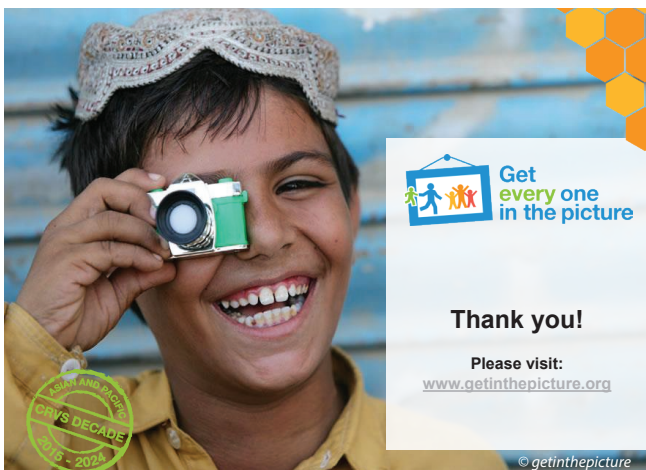
[www.spc.int/sdd](http://www.spc.int/sdd)

Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan: [www.pacific-crvs.org](http://www.pacific-crvs.org)

UN Decade for CRVS or Asia Pacific Regional Action Framework: [www.getinthepicture.org](http://www.getinthepicture.org)

## Tropical cyclone Winston

On the night of 20 February 2016, Fiji was hit by tropical cyclone Winston. The category 5 cyclone was the strongest to ever hit Fiji, and one of the strongest in Pacific history. Sustained winds of 230 km per hour struck the north of Viti Levu and left a trail of destruction, directly impacting at least 40% (347,000 people) of the Fijian population living within 50 km of the eye of the cyclone. **Initial damage estimates are already over half a billion US dollars.**



The Fiji Government officially requested international assistance and declared a 30 day **State of Natural Disaster**. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) is providing coordination support.

In an event like this, population data is crucial. The Statistics for Development Division (SDD) was quick to act, providing updated population projections (Fig. 1) to enable humanitarian agencies to better estimate the number of people in affected areas. Figure 2 shows the potential impacted population, which was calculated using intensity buffers – within 30 km of the eye of the cyclone, 30 to 40 km, 40 to 50 km, and 50 to 100 km. The population figures were projected to 2015 using age distribution from the 2007 census, at tikina (district) level, which was then pro-rated to match the total projected population. The tikina projections were then distributed throughout enumeration areas (EAs) according to the population weight of each of the EAs in 2007.

Fig. 1: 2015 projected population

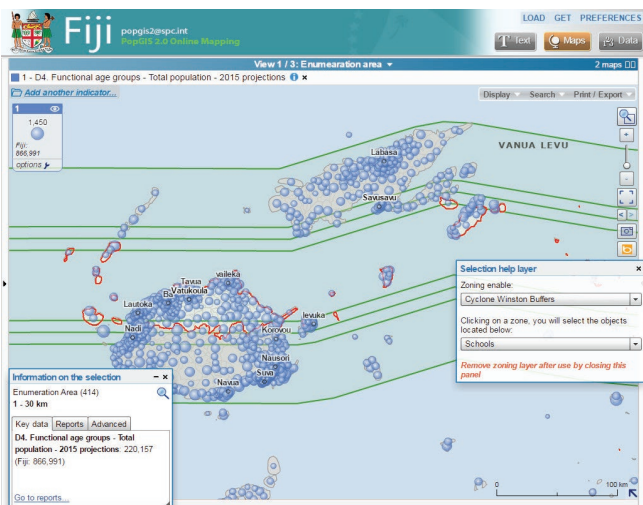
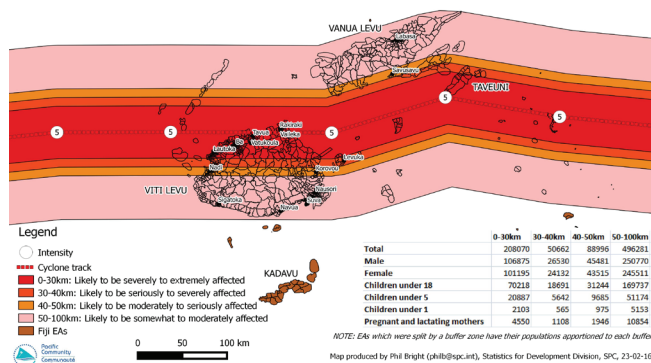


Fig. 2: Potential impacted population

CYCLONE WINSTON POTENTIAL IMPACTED POPULATION - 23/02/16

NOTE : Population figures projected to 2015 using age distribution from 2007 Population and Housing Census then prorated to match total projected population

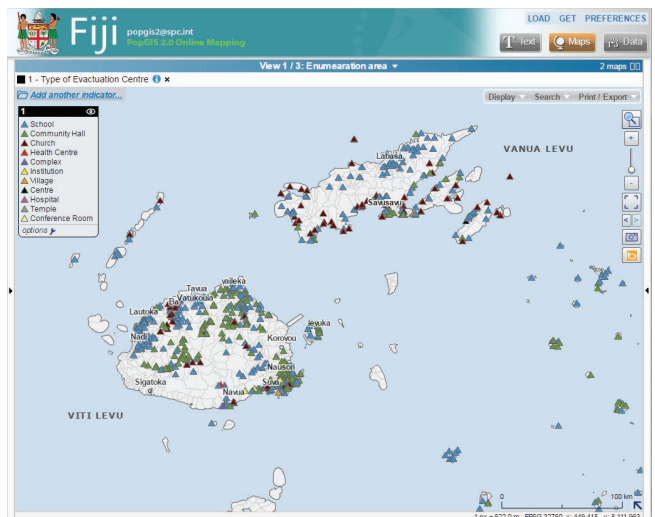


Source: SDD PopGIS map, projected 2015 population and potential impacted population

PopGIS2 a powerful crisis mapping tool

PopGIS 2 Fiji (<http://fiji.pogis.spc.int>) has been updated to include these new projections, as well as the locations of evacuation centres, schools and other useful indicators to help with relief efforts (Figure 3). The cyclone track and impact buffers can be activated to enable users to select various indicators that fall within them. Phil Bright, GIS Specialist and PopGIS Administrator, released a short video explaining how the data can be accessed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNesSv211HI&feature=youtu.be>.

Fig. 3: location of evacuation centers



Source: SDD PopGIS map, location of evacuation centers

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Useful links:

[www.spc.int/sdd](http://www.spc.int/sdd)

National Minimum Development Indicators (NMDI) database: [www.spc.int/nmdi](http://www.spc.int/nmdi)

PopGIS2 tool:

<http://www.spc.int/prism/regional-data-and-tools/pogis-2>

Tropical Cyclone Winston - Feb 2016 overview:

<http://reliefweb.int/disaster/tc-2016-000014-fji>