

SOPAC Trip Report 243

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**TRIP REPORT ON THE INTRODUCTORY MEETING OF
THE TROPICAL CYCLONE WARNING UPGRADE PROJECT**

NADI, FIJI

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by

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I attended the introductory Meeting of the Tropical Cyclone Warning Upgrade Project in Nadi from 3-4 February 1997. This is a 3 year project with a total budget of 1.6 million ECU and is funded by the European Union. It is coordinated by Neville Koop, who was formerly employed as the SPREP meteorologist. The project objectives are to:

1. Improve the quantity, quality and timeliness of information provided by in topical cyclone warning messages.
2. Strengthen the communication links between meteorological services, national disaster co-ordinators and the public, and
3. Ensure warning users understand the information contained in the tropical cyclone warning, and are aware of the appropriate actions to take.

The purpose of this meeting was to approve the inception report and 1997 work plan. The meeting was attended by directors of National Meteorological Services and National disaster managers of the participating countries plus several observer organizations. The participating countries are those Pacific ACP (African, Caribbean, and Pacific) and OCT (Overseas Countries and Territories) which are signatories to the LOME convention. These countries are Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa as well as French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna, and New Caledonia. Observers included SOPAC, UNDHA-SPPO, WMO, Forum Secretariat, and the Met services of New Zealand and Australia.

Following the opening remarks and an introduction of each participant, the meeting was devoted to an extensive discussion of the report and work plan which was tabled. Copies of the approved documents are available to anyone who is interested. The primary goals and proposed activities include training of meteorologists to improve forecasting, communication, management and media skills. There is also a component of public awareness which it was agreed should be done in conjunction with the UNDHA's disaster awareness program. An aspect of training which is of interest to SOPAC is a program which will improve the ability of the forecasters to predict intense rainfall events (which could cause flooding and landslides) and storm surges. It was agreed that generalized predictions of the storm surge would be a useful addition to the broadcast warning. These predictions would be based on relatively simple models and would not be suitable for detailed warnings in highly urbanized areas where the cost of evacuations would be very high. The point was

made that SOPAC has been attempting to address this requirement for more detailed predictions. Training will also be offered in the prediction of swell waves.

A major component of the program is the purchase and upgrading of equipment to improve the reliability of communications and the accuracy and density of weather observations and storm tracking. This will involve the installation of weather satellite receiving stations in several countries, installation of automatic weather stations in others and a variety of digital communications devices. The communications equipment will decouple the warning system from the local telephone systems so that warnings can be received even if the telephone system fails.

The third funding component consists of consultancies to examine diverse aspects of tropical cyclone forecasting and public awareness. Of scientific interest is a proposed consultancy to develop a comprehensive cyclone climatology for the South Pacific. The outputs will assist us in assessing the recurrence intervals of storm surges and associated risks. I have asked to see the terms of reference for the consultancy so that we have an opportunity to comment.

A list of contact addresses and email addresses were circulated and I have a copy. The meeting adjourned following approval of the work plan and inception report.