

Cyclone Winston Report

By Loslini Tuwere, director of YWAM Fiji and torchbearer for Beacon Media Fiji

March 2016

“Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.” Isaiah 42:12

Beacon Media: We started the year in full swing with Beacon Media training in January. We had Cheryl Reid founder of Beacon Media in Fiji training Teacher Aides for 6 primary schools in the larger Suva area. The training was specifically to assist the Year 3 slow or non readers in these schools. An added blessing was the Youth Centre YWAM team in Suva who joined and committed themselves to helping a primary school near their centre with one of their staff working full time in the school as a Year 3 Teacher Aide. The teacher aides were trained in helping children in literacy and math in small group setting and in one-on-one settings as well as to assist the teacher and the class in art etc. They were given literacy and math resource sets for free from Beacon Media to use and keep. The Fiji school year started on January 19th so the training was done early in order for the teacher aides to be at their allocated schools from the first week.

As this first term of school nears the end I have been blessed going around to the schools to see how the teacher aides have fared. It is encouraging to see that each teacher aide has a small group that they are working with. Without the teacher aides these students would have had to just struggle along with all the other students in the class. As a result of large classes without small group assistance from a teacher aide, as we have seen from last year there are students who go up the class each year yet not having the ability to read or understand basic math. One of the biggest advantages of having teacher aides is their opportunity to give loving and encouraging attention to the children.

Another opportunity that have arisen for Beacon Media is to help communities that have been devastated by Cyclone Winston. We are setting up a Beacon Media office in the Christian Community School where we could photocopy, laminate and put together Education Resource Sets. These are to be taken out to the communities where we need to train some teachers and parents to volunteer using the God centred resources to teach the children and assist them in literacy especially. Most primary schools in Fiji do not have a lot of reading material for the children and the cyclone has destroyed the little there were in schools, churches and homes.



Beacon Media Training for YWAM Youth Centre Staff



Packing up for Relief outreach to Nayavutoka

Cyclone Winston: February 20th, the day after my birthday our nation was devastated by the Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Winston. This was a life changing event for our nation. As far as we knew the Cyclone was headed straight for Suva. Although we heard it was a Category 5 we did not realize how devastating it was until a few days later when it became clear that the Cyclone had veered off and we in Suva had been spared the fury. I quote from my update:

From stories of our team leaders, and our personal visit, we realized the magnitude of the devastation. We heard the testimonies of the people and saw with our own eyes the destruction. I have only one conclusion and that is "God has spared us". Psalms 29, which speaks about the power of the voice of the Lord, came to me as we travelled along the affected areas.. As we sat with our friends and prayed and cried together in the midst of the devastations we could only cry out that we would meet and encounter God in a new way; that we would know Him in a deeper way than we have known Him before... His comfort, love, mercy and forgiveness. We heard testimony after testimony of how God miraculously saved people. At the moment the death toll from the cyclone stands at 42. There is no explanation of how people could have survived after losing everything. Some arrived at the safety point with only their underwear. They did not know how their clothes were ripped off their bodies as they ran. The forests have been stripped bare, the houses completely flattened. We saw corrugated iron rolled into balls and hanging on trees, whole roofs taken off, whole houses taken away. At the time of the cyclone there was also a 6.5 earthquake so people lost their houses and watched the tidal surges come in and take out stuff. Some were caught in the surge but survived miraculously. In the village of our friends, the rocks from the bottom of the sea were thrown up. There are wonderful testimonies of God saving and taking care of children.

I can't help but sense the desperate heart of God calling us Fijians, His Fijian bride to return to Him, to seek him, to experience his love and comfort. Every time I pray for the cyclone affected people I can't stop crying. I sense that this is a turning point for Fiji. In the language of my husband and his colleague in his office, "this Cyclone is a Game Changer for Fiji". On Friday night after returning from the trip, as we prayed with our Bible Study Group of YWAM associates, the Lord reminded me of Amos Chapter 4 and 5 and the other chapters too. I read through again Ps 29 and could see our state of Fiji mentioned in the scriptures. It's all about God calling His people to have an intimate relationship with Him, and that He is sovereign over the whole earth. It's not religion (which we are very good at in Fiji), but God that we have to seek.

When we go through the devastations it's like every living thing is dead except the PEOPLE! The huge trees are down, The forests stand naked as if a chemical bomb has exploded. The houses are gone, the church buildings are destroyed, the schools have gaping roofs and are closed but the people, families, children remain and these are the Treasures of God that he desperately longs for.

Our team went out to 2 villages along Eastern Coast. In Nayavutoka Village only 3 houses out of 69 survived. In Vucinilolo, the village where our House Helper'son (Asapeli) and family live, the Cyclone destroyed everything. The families survived lying flat on the ground and hiding in a rock cave. We took some relief items and small booklets of the Gospel of John. They lost everything including their bible. As we shared with them they could only testify that God had saved them. It was an opportunity to share the gospel too and led Asapeli and his wife to the Lord. In Nayavutoka, a man shared that our visit was like Jesus visiting the village. He sensed the deep need for the village for the word of God. He told us that next time we came we are to bring loud speakers and share the gospel so that people could hear whether they came to the meeting or not. When we returned from the East coast villages one of our leaders Seria took a team to Ovalau in response to a specific request from the Village Chief to take a YWAM team to do trauma counselling. This Village Chief is fed up with religious activities and has opened up the village to YWAM to come and teach and help the villagers. As the team did one on one with the ladies, Family issues came up that were there before Winston. The Lord had allowed the Cyclone to bring these issues up. This is why God has allowed such a disaster, so that we could get into the issues heavy on God's heart regarding families, children, His church in bondage etc.



Rock hill with the low cave on the right as refuge.



Sharing relief items and the word of God to Asapeli and wife

Prayer Needs:

- Pray for Fiji especially the church that we would change and respond in humility and brokenness to God in this time. That the spirit of religion will be broken over the church
- Pray for our Beacon Media program to take God-Centred Education resources to the affected villages and to find faithful villagers who could be trained to teach the children
- Pray for our relief efforts, for teams coming in that we only do what God wants us to do and not give in to the pressure of meeting many other needs

Thank you for your love and prayers.

In Christ

Losalini Tuwere



Kids ready for their musical recital.



Sitting in the famous cave of refuge. One could not stand. It was shelter for 7kids and 6 adults during TC Winston.