

RECOVERY

Terrifying Dash into the eye of the Cyclone

NEISAU TUIDRAKI
UNICEF PACIFIC

Giving birth to healthy twins is hard enough; doing it in the middle of a Category 5 Tropical Cyclone requires a special kind of determination and bravery.

Avalon Buksh was two weeks shy of her due date when Cyclone *Winston* hit Fiji.

As the family prepared for the strongest storm ever to make landfall in the Southern Hemisphere, the mother of six asked her husband Feroz, "What if I go into labour during the cyclone?"

Sure enough, as the cyclone's vicious winds wreaked havoc across Fiji, Avalon went into labour two weeks early, just as the cyclone reached Nadi in the early hours of Sunday morning.

"At 3.30am the contractions were getting stronger, we called emergency services and were told they couldn't do anything because their only ambulance was on its way to Lautoka Hospital already, we were

literally stuck".

Feroz had dropped their only transportation, a van, off at a friend's place for safe keeping in anticipation of flooding in their low-lying neighbourhood. Friends attempted to get the van to their home but fallen debris blocked their way.

In desperation, Feroz called the Cyclone Emergency Hotline, which prompted a fast response to the now heavily labouring mother. By 5.30am the police had arrived to take Avalon and Feroz to their van and they quickly went to the nearest hospital, albeit one ill-equipped for complicated deliveries.

"I knew I wasn't going to make it to Lautoka, so we went to Nadi Hospital," Avalon says, while gazing at the sleeping twins next to her.

"As soon as I got to hospital, the midwife checked me and said 'you're ready'. Within 20 minutes the first baby was born, Tina".

That's when things got even more complicated; the midwife discovered that the second baby was in breach position.

"During my clinic check-ups everything was fine and both babies were fine and in position but when the first baby came out the second baby flipped and was breached" Avalon says.

She needed to be rushed to Lautoka Hospital 45 minutes away by road for an emergency C-section. To make matters worse, there were two other emergency patients that needed to be transferred, but only one ambulance.

That's when Sister Alisi Kurimavua stepped in. Sister Alisi, a senior nurse with 20 years experience caring for children and families, pushed Avalon to the front of the queue, ensuring that she would receive the urgent medical attention needed to safely deliver the second baby.

Feroz followed the ambulance to Lautoka City, navigating downed power lines and debris all the way.

When they reach the hospital the on-duty doctor quickly assessed and prepped Avalon for theatre. This part, at least, went smoother than expected.

"Thank God for that doctor because he was able to manipulate the baby into position and I gave birth naturally to Gina," she says.

Avalon is back at her home where her husband and four older children are doting on the twins.

UNICEF is working around the clock to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable groups affected by Cyclone *Winston*. In addition to lifesaving measures such as the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation supplies, we have expertise in maternal, newborn and child health as well as 'psychological first aid', to help children and families get through difficult times.

UNICEF Pacific is working in partnership with the Government of Fiji to respond to the urgent needs of affected children and communities. Within 36 hours of the cyclone hitting Fiji, UNICEF was distributing pre-positioned emergency supplies to those most in need. **Edited by Paula Tuvuki**

Feedback: jyotip@fijisun.com.fj



Sister Alisi Kurimavua, a senior nurse at Nadi Hospital. Photo: UNICEF Pacific

Grandmother's sacrifice

NEISAU TUIDRAKI
UNICEF PACIFIC

As the walls crashed around them, Ateca Naquva's protective instincts kicked in, lunging to shield her granddaughter with her body, taking the full force of the falling tin walls.

That's how they found them in the wreckage. The elder Ateca shielding the younger, and bleeding profusely from a serious head wound.

The cyclone they said came around 6pm, the winds picked up and the house started to shake. The house collapsed before they got out.

Ateca's relatives found the pair under the wall of their home and carried them to the church where a young father was also receiving medical attention.

Her neighbour Sera grimaces as she says "The old lady's bleeding wouldn't stop and we just needed to get them to the hospital, we even tried searching for traditional herbal medicine that we use to stop bleeding but the winds were too



Ateca Naquva lies on her neighbour's floor surrounded by her grandchildren. Her 11-month old namesake Ateca (in blue jumper) sits nearby, oblivious to the sacrifice her grandmother made when Cyclone *Winston* tore down their home and the walls collapsed in on them. Photo: UNICEF Pacific

strong".

The village's young men then arrived at the hall and were shocked at the severity of the injuries they saw. They quickly organised a truck and armed themselves with cane knives and chainsaws in anticipation of the debris-covered roads.

"The boys wouldn't be deterred, they just got out there while the winds were still strong and got

the injured onto a truck safely and started the journey" says Sera.

What would normally take 45 minutes to get from Navolau No. 1 village to the nearest hospital in Rakiraki took the young men four hours of dodging power lines and cutting and clearing fallen trees. At the Rakiraki bridge they faced an even bigger hurdle, the bridge was badly damaged and underwater.

Undeterred, two of the young men battled the raging currents to get to the Fire Station; the firemen were then able to bring them across the bridge to the hospital to receive urgent medical attention.

"She's in and out of consciousness but the babies stay close to her, especially baby Ateca, she seems to sense her grandmother needs love" says Sera.

After receiving medical care at the overloaded Rakiraki Hospital, itself badly affected, Ateca was escorted back to the village by police and remains in a stable condition at home. Her family is hoping to return for further care as soon as they can obtain transport.

Edited by Paula Tuvuki

Feedback: jyotip@fijisun.com.fj

SODELPA to contribute more than \$70,000

MP's to deduct ten percent of annual salary and allowance for rehabilitation work

LITIA CAVA
SUVA

Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA) members of parliament have agreed to deduct 10 per cent of their annual salaries and allowances for rehabilitation work.

This was confirmed by Opposition Leader, Ro Teimumu Kepa.

"The total contribution is expected to exceed \$70,000," said Ro Teimumu.

"The Opposition does not have any budgetary allocation from which to lend support for disaster relief, however members were more than willing to contrib-

ute from their wages and salaries," she said.

Ro Teimumu said the Opposition Caucus also resolved to support the recalling of Parliament to formalise adequate funding and realignment of approved expenditures for 2016 in order to divert funds to support the recovery effort.

National Federation Party Leader, Biman Prasad refused to comment on the announcement made by Opposition Leader regarding SODELPA MP's.

Secretary-General to Parliament, Viniana Namosimalua, confirmed that Parliament has received the request made by SODELPA Party and they are now facilitating the request.

Edited by Paula Tuvuki

Feedback: litia.cava@fijisun.com.fj

MILITARY

RFMF personnel depart for Sinai

ROSI DOVIVERATA
SUVA

Twenty-eight Republic of Fiji Military Forces personnel departed for Sinai yesterday.

This is part of the annual rotation of Fijian men and women serving under the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO).

Draft Commanding Officer, Captain Ilai Tawakedrau is leading the first chalk of Lift 1.

RFMF Chief of Staff, Colonel Litea Seruiratu, said the next chalk of Lift 1 may depart in two weeks, depending on the availability of seats.

Colonel Seruiratu also confirmed that none of the Russian arms recently received by Fiji will be used in Sinai.

"All Russian military equipment will be used in the Golan Heights."

Apart from peacekeeping duties in the Middle East, RFMF personnel are leading the charge in disaster relief efforts around the country after the Severe Tropical Cyclone *Winston* struck on February 20.

Edited by Paula Tuvuki

Feedback: rosi.doviverata@fijisun.com.fj

RFMF Chief of Staff, Colonel Litea Seruiratu, said the next chalk of Lift 1 may depart in two weeks, depending on the availability of seats.