

# Fiji told it must spend billions to adapt to climate change

At COP 23 talks in Bonn, Fiji has called on developed nations to help the world's most vulnerable build resilience to climate change



Fijian girl walks over flooded land in Fiji after severe tropical cyclone Winston in 2016. A new report predicts floods will occur every second year if global emissions aren't abated. Photograph: chameleonseye/Getty Images

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To prepare for the rising temperatures, strengthening storms and higher sea levels in the coming decades, [Fiji](#) must spend an amount equivalent to its entire yearly gross domestic product over the next 10 years, according to the first comprehensive assessment of the small island nation's vulnerability to climate change, compiled by its government with the assistance of the World Bank.

Released half-way through the [COP23 in Bonn](#), which Fiji is presiding over, the report highlights five major interventions and 125 further actions that it says are necessary to achieve Fiji's development objectives, while facing the potentially devastating impacts of climate change. Combined those actions would cost about US\$4.5bn over the next decade.

The report concluded that some parts of the country, especially those on low-lying outer islands, could be made uninhabitable by sea level rise and increased storm surges. It recommended existing towns and cities be made more resilient, but also for brand new and resilient greenfield sites to be constructed to house the growing population.



In light of the results, the World Bank and Fiji called for the world to lift its ambitions in fighting climate change, and also for the developed world to help the world's most vulnerable people adapt and build resilience to climate change.

“The results of the [Climate Vulnerability Assessment] reinforce what we already know to be true – that the situation we face is urgent and the world needs to immediately raise its ambition to tackle this great threat,” said Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Fiji’s attorney general and minister responsible for climate change in a foreword to the report.

But he said the report itself would assist in that happening, since it “provides a specific blueprint that quantifies the resources necessary to climate-proof Fiji, giving us a full account of the threat that climate change poses to our national development.”

Victoria Kwakwa, vice president, East Asia and the Pacific at the World Bank said the Paris Agreement was not just a commitment to keeping global temperature rise well below 2C, but “also a global

commitment to help build resilience and adaptation capacity among vulnerable countries – especially those most at risk from climate change, such as Small Island Developing States.”

In the report, Fiji called on the world to take “drastic action that limits greenhouse gas emission while supporting action to enhance resilience.”

It notes that Fiji has limited capacity to manage those risks itself, and that investment from other nations was needed.

The biggest investment needed to build resilience in the country was into transport, where US\$228m was needed each year, the report found. A detailed analysis in the report found specific parts of the road network that were critical for the country, and should be strengthened to protect against worsening storms.

Significant sums were needed to protect the country’s water, health and education facilities, housing and environmental assets.

“These investments and expenditures would have resilience-related benefits that extend over decades – far beyond their implementation period – as well as significant non-resilience benefits, improving the population’s well-being and development prospects,” the report found.

Fiji is expected to face as much as a metre of sea level rise by the end of the century, increasing the risk of coastal flooding, with flood events that currently happen only once a century expected to recur every second year if global emissions are not abated.

In just a few decades – by 2050 – the fraction of the country’s GDP lost every year due to tropical cyclones is expected to increase by up to 50%, reaching more than 6.5%. That estimate didn’t include the additional risk caused by sea level rise, which would magnify it further.

The report also concluded that some parts of the country, especially those on low-lying outer islands, could be made uninhabitable by sea level rise and increased storm surges.

It also highlighted the impacts climate change would have on Fiji’s health system, with water-borne diseases and respiratory diseases expected to worsen. “These health issues threaten the Fiji population and will challenge the health care system, and could also have a negative impact of some key sectors of

the economy, especially the tourism sector, which is highly vulnerable to negative risk perceptions,” the report said.

Coming less than two years after [Tropical Cyclone Winston](#) devastated the country, killing 44 people and costing the economy 20% of its GDP, the findings are likely to raise some attention at COP23.

In a statement released with the report, prime minister of Fiji and current president of COP23 Voreqe “Frank” Bainimarama said: “As the president of the COP23 and on behalf of the small island nations, and building on the findings of this report, Fiji is asking the world for drastic action on climate change-building resilience through adaptation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions so that climate change does not impose a limit to our development and the aspiration of our people to live in their own lands.”

The talks going on this week and next at COP23 are focused on writing the “rulebook” for implementing the Paris Agreement – including how countries will be required to “ratchet up” their commitments to achieve the agreed aims.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/nov/10/fiji-told-it-must-spend-billions-to-adapt-to-climate-change>