

Michael Gane; *Report of Mission to Assess the Hurricane for Planning Purposes in Fiji*. Bradford, England: Disaster Research Unit, University of Bradford, 1975. 24 pp.

This paper reports the findings and recommendations of the author in his investigation of the impact of Hurricane Bebe (Oct., 1972) on the Fiji Islands.

The author discusses in a relatively pedestrian manner the nature of tropical cyclones as disaster producing phenomena and provides some statistical information on their recurrence at Fiji. He summarizes the general circumstances under which Bebe struck and gives some statistics on damage and loss of life. From his discussion, it becomes clear that the information needed to assess this disaster's impact was as difficult to acquire and to use when he arrived in Fiji, as was the information on hurricane warnings issued to the public during the approach of Bebe. He concludes that Bebe caused losses ranging between 2.3 and 4.6 percent of the gross national product.

While not attempting to state specifically how mitigation and preparedness measures should be evolved, the investigation resulted in the formulation of twenty generally worded recommendations for development of preparedness and warning plans, based largely upon the experience and practice in the United States. His assessment, however, while recognizing the

importance of satellite technology for tracking tropical cyclones, led to the opinion that radar and direct sensing systems would not likely contribute to more timely and accurate forecasts sufficiently to warrant the cost of procurement and maintenance.

By and large the thrust of the recommendations is to emphasize the need for better understanding and clear communications when action advices must be issued, and for more effective and efficient organization, planning and public education to this end.

If there is anything remarkable about this analysis, it is the tacit implication that when it comes to minimizing the impact of natural disaster in a developing country such as Fiji, the *key factor in this task* is no different than in developed countries such as the United States where boundless technology can be applied — namely: an ability to *communicate* credibly with the public *what* needs to be done, *when* it should be done, and the probable *consequences* of not doing it. Technology alone cannot substantially mitigate or eliminate the impact of natural disasters without accounting for the elements of expected human response to the disaster threat and the mitigating measures to be applied.

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