



ANGLICAN MISSIONS

El Niño: Preparedness in Drier Conditions

Drier conditions are likely in communities in Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Southern Cook Islands, Samoa, Palau and Fiji

What is El Niño?

El Niño is a natural phenomenon that occurs when Pacific trade winds shift and redirect warm waters toward the eastern Pacific. An El Niño event occurs every 2–7 years, usually lasting between 12–18 months. El Niño is not a singular, short-term weather event; rather, it is a long-term climate signal that can lead to changes in typical weather patterns. These changes can be worsened by climate change. **A 'super El Niño' event has been declared and is projected to be the strongest in living memory, lasting through early 2027.**

Depending on where your community is in the Pacific, it will experience generally wetter or generally drier conditions than normal. It is important to note that different communities in the same country might have different microclimates, meaning that your community might experience the impacts of El Niño differently.

Possible Effects of El Niño in drier conditions:

Drought conditions

Significant reductions in rainfall lead to extended periods of drought. Heatwaves and wildfires are likely to increase.

Water shortages

Water insecurity may intensify. Previously full rivers and lakes may dry up or lose substantial water. Communities may have to gather water from further away.

Reduced crop yield

Drought conditions may cause poor germination and growth, lower yields, and more pests and diseases, decreasing crop production. Markets and economies may face greater strain.

Increase in disease

Conditions which favour pathogens and disease-carrying vectors might increase. This can increase the risk of diseases such as Dengue, Zika, and Malaria.

High daytime and low nighttime temperatures

A reduction in cloud cover will increase temperatures during the day, and decrease temperatures at night. All communities should be prepared for high risk of extreme temperatures, and communities at high elevations should be aware that overnight frosts can destroy crops.

Sea level fall

You can expect lower sea levels on average, which can result in coral bleaching, changes in fish movement, and reductions in fishery catch.

Future risk of flooding and erosion

Following drought conditions from El Niño, dry grounds will increase the risk of landslides and surface flooding during next years' wet season.

For more information visit:

<https://anglicanmissions.org.nz/el-nino/>

Key Community Preparedness Activities



Knowing how to prepare your community for the potential effects of El Niño will reduce its impact



STAY INFORMED AND MOBILISE

Monitor trusted local weather advisories. Contact your emergency management office. Meet as a community to discuss what you will do to prepare, including women and youth groups.



REPAIR WATER CATCHMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Ensure that all water tanks, guttering, and filtration units are functional. Invest in more water storage where possible. Boil any water that is not known to be safe.



AVOID WASTING WATER

Save water wherever you can and use as little water as possible for washing and cooking.



WASH HANDS AND MAINTAIN PERSONAL HYGIENE

The effects of El Niño result in a substantial increase in disease risk. Wash your hands frequently and maintain personal hygiene. Keep children away from high-risk areas, such as standing water.



PREPARE FOR HIGHER TEMPERATURES

Reduce travel and outdoor labour during peak hours of heat. Provide shade and extra water for crops and livestock. Wear sun protection.



MAINTAIN FOOD SUPPLIES

Store any food you can for eating during drier periods. Support vulnerable community members who may not have sufficient food stores.



DO NOT BURN RUBBISH OR LIGHT FIRES

Dry conditions and elevated winds increase wild fire risk.



PUBLIC EDUCATION

Share what you know with your community. Know how to stay safe from disease. Know the symptoms of heat stress, and seek early assistance.

HIGHER RISK GROUPS

Be aware of who might be most impacted by the effects of El Niño, and do what you can to support them.



Women. Several factors make women more vulnerable to the effects of El Niño in both wetter and drier conditions, including: burden of care for children and older people, menstrual hygiene needs, cooking and nutrition responsibility, exposure to gender-based violence, and limited land ownership and voice in decision-making.



Children. Children rely heavily on caregivers, are often excluded from decision-making, and are at heightened risk of injury and disease if left unattended.



Older people and people with disabilities. These groups face additional obstacles to mobility, are often excluded from decision-making and disaster preparedness planning, and rely on care-givers.

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If you have questions about your area, reach out to your local meteorological office or emergency management office. You can also email info@anglicanmissions.org.nz.