

STRENGTHENING DISASTER MANAGEMENT POLICY IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

Policy reform for disaster preparedness

AT A GLANCE

Countries Pacific Island Countries (PICs): Fiji, Samoa, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Risks Tropical Storms, droughts, floods, storm surges, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, sea level rise

Areas of engagement Deepening engagements in resilience to climate change, Enabling resilient recovery

Pacific Island Countries are developing national policy and regulatory frameworks to address the threat of climate and weather-induced disasters.

CONTEXT

Losses from disaster shocks are felt across Pacific Islands. Pacific Island Countries (PIC) such as Fiji, Samoa, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu have been repeatedly hit by tropical cyclones, each time incurring significant losses. For example, Vanuatu alone is estimated to incur an average of \$48 million of losses per year due to earthquakes and tropical storms, which represents approximately 6.6% of its GDP. In Tuvalu, 45% of the population were displaced in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Pam which hit in 2015.

Given the common challenges that PICs face in the increasing variability of impacts from climate-related hazards, governments in the region are looking to strengthen and harmonize policies, strategies, and regulations for effective disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA). Challenges remain in strengthening national policy and regulatory frameworks and in effectively coordinating these efforts. The Africa Caribbean Pacific – European Union Natural Disaster Risk Reduction (ACP-EU NDRR) Program has been solicited by the governments of Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Tuvalu to help strengthen and coordinate these

Effects of Cyclone Winston in Fiji. World Bank/Vlad Sokhin



national frameworks. The ACP-EU NDRR Program is an initiative of the ACP Group of States, funded by the EU and managed by the Global Facility for Disaster reduction and Recovery (GFDRR).

APPROACH

Introduction of customized policy responses to tackle disaster and climate threats

In order to address disaster and climate risks, PICs have upgraded their policies, strategies, and regulations to tackle future threat scenarios by considering the projected effects of climate change into disaster resilience planning. Relevant Ministries and Disaster Agencies in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Tuvalu have collaborated to develop or strengthen their respective DRM and CCA policies and regulatory frameworks, in order to enhance preparedness and response to climate and disaster shocks.

These efforts have been combined with planned World Bank investments that aim to help countries strengthen legal, policy and other institutional aspects of DRM, as well as provide immediate liquidity in the aftermath of disasters.

RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

FIJI A consortium of government ministries, including those responsible for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Education, Heritage and Arts, Rural and Maritime Development, and Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, has finalized the preparation of guidelines for the implementation of the National Building Code. This has in turn strengthened Fiji's capacity to improve the design and construction of single-story houses and schools to prepare for climate and disaster risks. The new guidelines of the National Building Code include practical solutions and illustrations showing best practices for the design and construction of new buildings.

SAMOA The Ministry of Works, Transport, and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment have worked together to strengthen the country's institutional policy framework for CCA and DRM. This has entailed developing practical solutions, guidelines, and awareness of revised building codes and standards which has increased the country's ability to assess building applications and to check compliance with new building codes. The government has also communicated the new building guidelines to stakeholders in the private sector and reached out to communities to raise awareness of climate and disaster-related risks.

VANUATU A multi-pronged policy analysis was conducted to identify areas that need to be strengthened for an effective national DRM and CCA framework to take root. The government revised its National DRM Act and the National Subdivision Policy and developed a Disaster Recovery Framework that will provide advice for implementing post-disaster recovery and "build back better" measures.

TUVALU Technical and analytical work was undertaken to review existing DRM policies, plans and regulations to identify potential gaps and identify priority reform actions and to enhance the government's capacity to implement the National Strategic Action Plan for climate change and DRM.



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LESSONS LEARNED

Revised DRM and CCA policies have a direct impact on promoting resilient infrastructure

New DRM and CCA strategies represent a policy shift from mitigating damage to addressing the causes of risk across many industries, including the building and construction sectors. This can be seen, for example, in the new Building Act of Tuvalu.

New policies are the result of an inclusive, whole-of-society approach

Each PIC solicited expertise and feedback from a broad representation of societal actors to design the new DRM frameworks. Traditional institutions representing indigenous communities, educational and health experts, and engineers from the private sector worked alongside government ministries, such as Fiji's Ministry of Itaukei Affairs, to promote inclusive and sustainable risk planning.

"The government of Samoa is continuing to deliver on reforms that will strengthen our economy, enhance our resilience to climate change and natural hazards, and reduce the scourge of non-communicable diseases. We are pleased to partner with the World Bank as we work for Samoa's people, guided by our Strategy for the Development of Samoa."

—Hon. Sili Epa Tuioti, Samoa's Minister of Finance