



United Nations  
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction



## Mid-Term Review

### Pacific Regional DRM Framework for Action

- Regional Consultations of 13 April and 13 August 2010 -

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#### **BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY:**

Five years into the implementation of the HFA, the UN Secretary General indicated to the General Assembly to initiate the mid-term review (MTR) of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in 2010 through the UNISDR Secretariat. Subsequently, the 2009 Pacific Platform for DRM recommended a mid-term review of the Pacific Regional DRR & DM Framework for Action (RFA) coordinated by SOPAC.

In the Pacific region, the MTR processes for the RFA and HFA were closely linked. A set of broad strategic questions derived from the consultation questions which had been developed for the HFA MTR provided information about the extent to which the RFA/HFA have progressed so far; the obstacles/successes to implementation; emerging issues that need to be incorporated to achieve a sustainable reduction in disaster losses; and what should be the focus of international, regional and national action in DRM beyond 2015. The MTR process also provided an opportunity to consult with countries and partners as to whether or not disaster risk reduction should be mainstreamed into the Millennium Development Goals, as these are also being reviewed during the course of the year. The 2010 Pacific Platform for DRM and other regional meetings were a key milestones in the MTR consultations with PICs and partners. The overall HFA MTR is also informed by a review of existing reports and studies, and other structured workshops at regional and national level, interviews, and online debates.

The responses to the Mid-term Review (MTR) consultation questions were collated on two separate occasions. Firstly, from participants attending the Regional Launch Workshop '**2009/11 Biennial Progress Review Cycle of the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005 - 2015 (RFA) and the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)**' which was jointly organized by UNISDR and SOPAC on 13 April 2010 in Suva, Fiji<sup>1</sup>; referred to as preliminary regional consultations.

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Secondly, from participants attending the 2010 **Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management on 'Enhancing the Implementation of the Pacific DRR & DM Framework for Action through a Multi-Stakeholder Approach'** which was co-convened by SOPAC and UNISDR from 9-13 August, in Suva, Fiji.

Whilst the preliminary round of consultations predominantly covered the views of regional partners, the consultations during the Pacific Platform meeting also covered responses and views of representatives of Pacific island countries and territories (PICT). In total, the views of approximately 100 respondents informed the RFA MTR.

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## **PACIFIC MTR RESPONSES:**

### **QUESTION 1**

In your experience has the RFA generally been instrumental over the past five years in reducing disaster losses in communities and countries in the Pacific?

#### **Sub-questions**

1.1 List down the most important areas/ aspects in which the RFA has been able to contribute to reduce disaster losses in the region?

1.2 Which elements/ obstacles have prevented the RFA from achieving its intended outcome in the region?

#### *Responses from Workshop Participants:*

Respondents found this question difficult to answer due to a lack of reliable and readily available data, as well as problems with attributing the RFA's contribution to reducing disaster losses in the Pacific. It was therefore suggested that in-depth studies may be needed which could generate data that might allow for attribution and a better understanding of the RFA's role and impact in the Pacific.

The predominant opinion was that the RFA has been instrumental in bringing various stakeholders together, in strengthening partnerships and improving coordination in disaster risk management. The RFA was considered a useful advocacy and policy guidance tool. It certainly helped to create an enabling environment and paved a common ground for disaster risk management. At the same time, respondents felt that more could have been done in terms of disseminating the RFA and improving outreach beyond the NDMOs with a focus on a wider cross section of government departments.

Respondents also found that the RFA contributed to improved levels of preparedness for some types of disasters, in particular events that allow for a reasonable warning time. However, the respondents noted that preparedness for sudden-onset disasters is less developed. Examples mentioned included the response to recent Cyclone Tomas

(March 2010) in Fiji, which was characterized by good preparedness, and Tonga, which was better prepared for cyclones than tsunamis. Overall, the approach to disaster risk management was still considered to be largely focused on disaster events rather than on addressing underlying risk.

The main obstacle identified as preventing the RFA from achieving its intended outcome was that disaster risk management is still not consistently reflected in all PICs National Development Strategies. A 'national mandate' for disaster risk management was considered an important prerequisite for mainstreaming disaster risk management into the national and sectoral development agendas. Regional and global frameworks for disaster risk management were not considered sufficient to achieve this.

## **QUESTION 2**

How has the RFA informed decision-making or priority setting in the Pacific region?

### *Responses from Workshop Participants:*

The RFA, which has been endorsed by Pacific leaders, increased the recognition of disaster risk management by decision-makers. The development and endorsement of National Action Plans for Disaster Risk Management by several PICs was mentioned as a sound example of effective priority setting and mainstreaming of disaster risk management.

The perspective of development partners was that overall the RFA has underpinned disaster risk management work in the region. Proof of this was the inclusion of disaster risk management in the UNDAF for the Pacific Sub-Region 2008-2012. However, it had also occurred that partners would decide to meet PICs requests for support without making sure that these were in line with various regional policy commitments, such as the RFA. It was also suggested by some respondents that disaster risk management priorities in the Pacific were much more driven and determined by major disaster events rather than the strategic guidance of the RFA.

Whilst the RFA provided guidance to a certain strata of national, regional and international stakeholders, respondents were of the opinion that civil society and NGOs only recently started to embrace the RFA in their work.

## **QUESTION 3**

What specific elements of the RFA have not been pursued or implemented well and why?

### **Sub-questions**

3.1 What were the most critical factors that prevented effectiveness in those areas?

### 3.2 What are the specific constraints to start or increase investments in disaster risk reduction in the Pacific?

#### Responses from Workshop Participants:

Again, respondents encountered difficulties answering the question due to a lack of reliable and readily available data. However, there was agreement that PICs lacked the necessary implementation capacities to act upon regional and national policy commitments. Staff in relevant departments at the national and sub-national levels was overloaded and did not have the capacity to absorb technical assistance and resources, even when available. In addition to this, high staff turn-over required continuous training and re-training which was time consuming and costly. Respondents recommended addressing this by developing career paths in the civil service for disaster risk management specialists, so their expertise could be secured over the long term.

Also the capacity of many regional partners was stretched, as they generally cover 10 – 17 countries across the region. In particular, the frequent emergency response operations required considerable staff, which would not allow sufficient time to staff to devote for the planning and follow-up of long-term disaster reduction programmes.

Another factor mentioned was a lack of commitment from all stakeholders at the policy and governance level, which is still limited in many cases. Whilst some countries had achieved good progress with developing their legal and institutional mechanisms, there was still a considerable gap in terms of sustained budgetary allocations for disaster risk management. All too often funds allocated by governments for disaster risk management were reallocated to other pressing needs. Linking PICs disaster risk management agenda with climate change adaptation was considered a promising approach towards achieving greater political will. Thus, the recent trend of PICs to developed combined DRM/CCA National Action Plans was a welcome development. Also, cultural dimensions and religious beliefs were found to provide barriers to the successful implementation of the RFA and the disaster risk management activities proposed therein.

#### **QUESTION 4**

In your experience, does the RFA sufficiently encourage community participation and the utilization of local knowledge to reduce disaster risk? I.e. In the Pacific region, have communities and local authorities been empowered and is local knowledge and community action useful and tapped into to manage and reduce disaster risk? If so, how? If not, why not?

#### **Sub-questions**

4.1 How have national governments communicated RFA requirements and commitments to local government? Are local governments empowered through ad

hoc legislation and budget allocations to implement appropriate disaster risk reduction plans?

4.2 Which institutional mechanism(s) at the national level are responsible for ensuring this link with local governments and community organizations? Please provide examples from PICs.

*Responses from Workshop Participants:*

Respondents questioned the level of community participation in the development of the RFA and considered the framework to be predominantly a top-down, regional strategy document. Whilst it was acknowledged that the RFA does encourage community participation, the actual implementation on the ground, however, was considered a challenge. At the moment CBDRM and other buzzwords, i.e. traditional knowledge and culture, are incorporated in the RFA as cross-cutting issues. Respondents deliberated whether CBDRM should receive greater emphasis in the RFA and become a theme on its own to allow for a more effective involvement of communities. This was only considered possible if it reflected PICs disaster risk management priorities. Respondents also discussed whether it was too early for the RFA to demonstrate evidence of enhanced community participation.

Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) projects in the Pacific are usually carried out as isolated initiatives. They often generate a considerable repertoire of good practices and research; however, these are rarely shared and used across the wider regional network of PICs and partners. Many CBDRM projects claim to work at the provincial level, but actually do not engage effectively with local government. They mostly work through National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) at the national level.

Respondents were of the opinion that there is little, if any, awareness of the RFA within Pacific Island communities. It was also felt that local government representatives would most likely not have heard about the RFA as yet. A major challenge is that there is no budget allocation for disaster risk management at the provincial and district level in most countries. Where it exists, the understanding of disaster risk management is very limited, explaining why there have been no significant improvements in regards to risk sensitive infrastructure and development planning.

In terms of the institutional mechanisms responsible for ensuring links with the community, respondents were of the opinion that a broad spectrum of stakeholders at the national level needs to collaborate better in order to achieve this. The establishment of National Platforms for Disaster Risk Management was discussed as an opportune mechanism for achieving this. The Ministries of Finance and Development Planning could facilitate the trickling down process, as most ministries and departments have counterparts at the district level. In particular, the health and education sectors were

considered key when it comes to raising community awareness of disaster risk management and CBDRM.

As regards the role of the NDMOs, respondents felt that they are more geared towards disaster response and have a lack of capacity, often without dedicated personnel to focus on CBDRM issues. Also, NDMOs are often hesitating to collaborate meaningfully and over an extended period with CSO/NGOs.

## **QUESTION 5**

In your experience does the general public in the Pacific region have a culture of safety and resilience? For example, do people in the Pacific typically seek information about land safety, building structures etc. prior to building or purchasing properties? Do they expect politicians to have national and local disaster risk reduction plans in place? Do they acquire, or are required by law to acquire, insurance for their properties, crops and livelihoods if they live in disaster prone areas? Are they fully informed, trained if necessary, and equipped about what needs to be done in case of a disaster?

### **Sub-questions**

- 5.1 If you answered YES to question 1 above: What do you think are the three main elements that contributed to creating such a culture amongst the general public and how long did it take to develop?
  
- 5.2 If you answered NO to question 1 above: What do you think needs to be done to instil a culture of safety and resilience at the level? Who should do it and why?

### **Responses from Workshop Participants:**

Respondents felt that there is only limited awareness of disaster preparedness, disaster risk management, plans and legislation at the community level and in the general public. Disaster relevant information is not shared effectively at the national level (several reasons were mentioned, including legal restrictions), which also limits its dissemination down to the community level. In addition, there is a lack of resources and capacities at the community level to access information even when available. In general, however, experiences across PICTs and communities therein were not considered to be consistent as regards disaster response, preparedness or early warning capacities.

Some communities and villages in PICs are characterized by strong social and traditional systems which makes them resilient to, though not necessarily safe from, disasters. There is often a high level of risk acceptance, even among communities demonstrating heightened risk awareness. Frequently, communities settle in risk-prone areas because of their dependency on land and resources, or due to other opportunities afforded by the location. Respondents also noted a culture of dependency in some Pacific island communities which was becoming a major problem that needed to be overcome;

highlighting again the fact that it was difficult to come to any general statement or conclusion in response to this question.

The main stakeholders who should drive disaster risk management and a culture of safety at the local level were identified to be the agriculture, health, and education sectors. Also politicians were seen to play a key role.

## QUESTION 6

How can the implementation of RFA Theme 6: 'Reducing Underlying Risk Factors' be strengthened?

### Responses from Workshop Participants:

In response to this question, participants opted to identify good practices in the Pacific for the implementation of Theme 6, which could be built on during the coming years. Successes and approaches needed to be shared more widely. In particular the application of risk assessment methodologies and how they have influenced investment decisions is still a crucial areas that needs strengthening.

A number of countries have made progress with the development of **building codes**; however, they usually remain difficult to enforce and implement due to a variety of reasons, e.g. custom land laws, etc. More focus should be placed on analysing and addressing these bottlenecks in order for building codes to achieve their intended risk reduction goals.

The launch of the **South Pacific Engineers Association** has been a promising development in recent years. The Association was established to create a register of engineers and to promote higher operating standards. In Fiji, the National Engineers Registration Act is not active. Overall, there is still a lack of awareness across the Pacific at the community level regarding basic building principles that can limit damage from natural hazards. Recent events have proven that major damage has been to homes that are non-compliant with these principles. Overall, more needed to be done to exploit linkages with the private sector, beyond the engineering sector.

**National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs)** in the Pacific are in general small and under-resourced units with a variety of responsibilities ranging from preparedness, to response, and disaster risk reduction. Apart from strengthening the human and financial capacities of NDMOs, it was considered crucial to get the Ministries of Finance and Planning more engaged in disaster risk reduction, as they are likely to give weight to any intervention and to command the necessary leadership across other key development sectors, which is important for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development. It was felt that NDMOs are often very policy-heavy with little capacity to implement.

There are also a number of **experiences at the sector level** which can be exploited further in order to address underlying disaster risk. For example, in Samoa a tree was

discovered after the tsunami in 2009 that was particularly resilient to the impact of the salt water. The Ministry of Agriculture is now considering planting more of these trees in coastal areas. Such experiences could be shared across the region. In Fiji, the Ministry of Agriculture opted to set up seed depositories in a range of locations across the country after the January 2009 floods. This has considerably reduced vulnerability of the agricultural sector to weather extremes over the past months, as seed production could continue in those locations that had not been impacted by natural hazards.

**Community participation** was also considered an important determinant of successful disaster risk reduction. After the tsunami disaster in Samoa, communities themselves - and not the government - decided to move to less hazardous locations on elevated grounds. The fact that the majority of households had access to safe lands was certainly a key to success.

The Pacific has a number of well developed **generic regional approaches**. However, experience has shown that the greatest success can be achieved when initiatives start small and are in sync with countries' own policies and systems. This provides opportunities for improvement which are consistent with the capacity of under-resourced NDMOs and government departments in the Pacific. Linking disaster risk management frameworks to other existing policy frameworks, such as climate change, poverty reduction and others, also provided opportunities for mainstreaming.

## QUESTION 7

What are the entry points in the RFA to integrate or link with climate change adaptation in the next five years of the RFA implementation?

7.1 What kind of policy and programmatic linkages that have proven to be helpful for the integration of DRR and climate change adaptation?

7.2 What would be the most conducive institutional arrangements at the national level to realize stronger integration between DRR and climate change?

### Responses from Workshop Participants:

It was suggested that SPREP, SOPAC, UNISDR and selected representatives of national governments set up a **steering committee** that can work to identify some common priorities and provide consistent technical inputs in order to link disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation throughout the Pacific.

Another entry point mentioned was **joint programming** of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives and the pooling of resources. In particular, the development of **common National Action Plans for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation** and carrying out combined risk assessment for DRM/CCA were considered as important entry points. For this to happen, more emphasis would

have to be placed on coordination and bringing together the DRM and CCA stakeholders and to identify ways to utilize contributions from different parts of government. Some examples already exist in the Pacific, such as in Tonga and the Federated States of Micronesia. Also recent trends towards bringing the responsibilities for DRM and CCA under one department or ministry, such as for example in Samoa and the Solomon Islands are considered promising developments. A panel of DRR/CCA experts at the national level to guide policy and strategic planning was also considered necessary. The SOPAC Integrated Water Resources Management project in the Pacific was mentioned as a good example of getting different interest groups together to provide integrated solutions for flood response and water resources management. Other good practices on where DRR and CCA have been linked successfully needed to be documented and shared.

A Further important entry point for an integrated approach was at the **community level** where the issues of development, environmental degradation, climate change and DRM naturally come together and where it is easier to plan and mitigate their consequences in an integrated manner. Awareness raising, such as the King tide festivals in Tuvalu, was considered good practice in helping visitors better understand the risks to which the community is regularly exposed. Also integrated land use planning, climate forecasting and disaster risk assessments were considered good entry points.

In regard to resource mobilization, it was felt that NDMOs need to get more involved in order to be able to tap into resources for climate change adaptation, such as the AusAID-supported CCA initiative. In general, PICs still have difficulty in sourcing funding for climate change adaptation. An example from the Cook Islands was cited, where it was a challenge to secure funds for extra costs to ensure the new port facilities are built in a climate-resilient manner.

## **QUESTION 8**

What are the three most important things the international/regional community could support in the Pacific for furthering the implementation of the RFA?

### **Sub-questions**

8.1 What adjustments, if any, would be helpful in the international/regional structures of disaster risk reduction and disaster management to help accelerate the implementation of the RFA?

8.2 What kind of financial instruments would be helpful in support of DRR action at the national, local and community level?

### *Responses from Workshop Participants:*

A number of key challenges and issues were identified for implementing the RFA. Firstly, it was considered important to find appropriate solutions for better coordinating the

many regional actors working in the Pacific. A prerequisite was for this was to ensure the continuity of SOPAC's DRM mandate and functions at the regional level (beyond SOPAC's transition into SPC), as well as for SOPAC to strike an appropriate balance between its role as regional DRM coordinator and implementer of key technical programmes.

There was also a discussion on what is an appropriate level of regional technical support to move ahead national DRM agendas in a manner that generates government ownership and sustainability. Some PICT representatives noted that they were still dependant on regional technical assistance five years into the implementation of the RFA. Whilst for some highly specialized areas (such as tropical cyclone forecasting or tsunami warning) this may continue to be the most appropriate and cost effective approach, NDMOs would like to be sufficiently skilled to take the lead in the delivery of their DRM programmes. This would require the provision of a much more appropriate and adapted technical assistance that builds on PICTs ideas, needs and capacities.

Donor funding was not considered flexible or programmatic and long-term enough to suit the needs of PIC governments and achieve sustainable results. In particular, difficulties in securing funding support for NAP implementation mechanisms were considered a tremendous set back which slowed down progress in DRM. Also, donor assistance was often not in sync with the NAP planning time frames. It was felt that donors should also investigate avenues within their own institutions for mainstreaming DRR in their development funding, for example by including DRR criteria into guidelines for the preparation of project documents. This would contribute to making development investment more resilient to the impacts of natural hazards. Regional support needed to be complemented with appropriate bilateral funding for in-country programmes. In this context it was noted that PICTs needed more information and guidance on how to access financial support from regional/bilateral and international sources.

Also, governments need to demonstrate their commitment. They have already done so in writing by endorsing their National Action Plans, the RFA and the HFA. However, they are not yet providing matching investments for implementing their DRM priorities through national resourcing of DRM or by tapping into regional and global support. For this to happen, national planning agencies needed to be more involved so that DRM can be fully integrated into PICTs National Sustainable Development Plans and corporate plans. This is a challenge; since PIC's relatively easy access to post-disaster humanitarian assistance may act as 'discouragement' to invest in DRM. It is therefore important to place more effort into the ability to assess and communicate the long-term economic benefits of disaster risk reduction versus post-disaster humanitarian assistance. This would help by supporting advocacy for DRM within governments with evidence based arguments.

Respondents also expressed a desire to strengthen the continuum between disaster risk reduction and disaster response by involving the UN-led Pacific Humanitarian Team more consistently in the discussions on the RFA.

For the coming years of RFA implementation, the following recommendations were made:

- Coordination at regional and national level to be proactive and strong in order to manage and bring in multiple partners/sectors/levels;
- Further clarify the roles of partners and stakeholders vis-à-vis the RFA and how they can support its implementation;
- Develop and integrate financial targets into the RFA and NAPs (e.g. % of humanitarian assistance; % of adaptation funding; and similar);
- Provide more flexible funding for DRM programmes;
- Disaster risk management and reduction is not the sole responsibility of the NDMOs and effective avenues for mainstreaming DRR into national and sectoral development needs to be found;
- Examine how the linkages between response and DRR could be strengthened in order to achieve a better continuum;
- Strengthen evidence-based decision making on disaster risk reduction through socio-economic impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis.

**Feedback on MTR questions:**

Question 3:

Respondents suggested including an additional question to the Mid-Term Review, i.e. how well PICs National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) are reflected in the RFA? And which components of the RFA have been included in the NSDS? There are other frameworks, such as the MDGs and the Pacific Plan, which could be analyzed accordingly.

Question 4:

In regards to the Questions the participants of Group 2 found the questions too loaded. Questions are trying to cover too many aspects in one question.